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THE

WORKS

OF THE

Rev. John Witherspoon,

D. D. L. L. D.

LATE PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE, AT PRINCETON NEW-JERSEY.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

An Account of the Author's Life, in a Sermon occaſioned by his Death, by the

REV. DR. JOHN RODGERS,

OF NEW YORK.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE FOLLOWING

PREFACE

Was Publiſhed in the European, which makes but a part of the American Edition.

THE following Treatises were originally published at different times, and some of them on particular occasions; but the attentive reader will easily perceive one leading design running through the whole. The author hath long been of opinion, that the great decay of religion in all parts of this kingdom, *is chiefly owing to a departure from* the truth as it is in JESUS, *from those doctrines which chiefly constitute the substance of the gospel. It may perhaps be justly imputed to other general causes in part, and in some measure to less universal causes in particular places; but as all moral action must arise from principle, otherwise it ought not to be called by that name,* the immediate and moſt powerful cauſe of degeneracy in practice, muſt always be a corruption in principle.

I am sensible that many will be ready to cry out on this occasion, "Such notions arise from narrowness of mind and uncharitable sentiments." I answer, that it is surprising to think how easily the fashionable or cant phrases of the age, will pass among superficial thinkers and readers, without the least attention either to their meaning, or to the evidence on which they are founded.

Thus at present, if a man shall write or speak against certain principles, and stile them pernicious, it will be thought a sufficient vindication of them to make a beaten common-place encomium on liberty of conscience and freedom of enquiry. Blessed be God, this great and sacred privilege is well secured to us in this nation: But pray, is it not mine as well as yours? And is it not the very exercise of this liberty, for every man to endeavor to support those principles which appear to him to be founded on Reason and Scripture, as well as to attack without scruple every thing which he believes to be contrary to either.

Let it also be observed, that if freedom of inquiry be a blessing at all, it can be so for no other reason than the excellence and salutary influence of real truth, when it can be discovered. If truth and error are equally safe, nothing can be more foolish than for a man to waste his time in endeavoring to distinguish the one from the other. What a view does

it give us of the weakness of human nature, that the same persons so frequently hold inconsistent principles? How many will say the strongest things in favor of an impartial search after truth, and with the very same breath tell you, "It is of no consequence at all, either for time or "eternity, whether you hold one opinion or another."

These reflections are only designed to procure a candid unprejudiced hearing to what is offered in the following pages, in defence of what appears to me the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, which are now so greatly neglected, or so openly despised. I am encouraged to this republication by the great demand there has been for some of the pieces, particularly The Eſſay on Juſtification.

I must observe here, that I have received several letters on this subject, desiring that the phrase imputed righteouſneſs *might be changed, as liable to great exceptions; a request which I would readily have complied with, if it could be made appear to be either unscriptural or dangerous. But as I apprehend it is fully warranted by* Rom. iv. 6. *and many other passages; so I do not see what can be understood by it, different from or more dangerous than forgiveness of sin and acceptance with* God, *not for our own but for* Christ's *sake. As the case stands, therefore it is to be feared, that a studied endeavor to avoid the expression would do more harm on the one hand than it could do service on the other.*

In the Treatise on Regeneration, *now first published, the same general design is pursued, but in a way more directly practical; and indeed I am fully convinced, that it is not only of much greater moment to make* experimental *than* ſpeculative Chriſtians, *but that to explain and enforce the doctrines of the gospel is a better way to produce an unshaken persuasion of their truth, than to collect and refute the cavils of adversaries, which, though they are often trifling, are notwithstanding innumerable. I hope this will excuse the introducing several passages of Scripture in the last mentioned* Treatiſe, *and applying them on what appears to me to be their obvious meaning, without taking the least notice of the unwearied pains frequently taken by wire drawing critics to interpret them in a contrary sense.*

London, June, 1764. J. W.

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THE

FAITHFUL SERVANT REWARDED:

A

SERMON,

Delivered at Princeton, before the Board of Trustees of the College of New-Jersey, May 6, 1795, occasioned by the death of the Rev. JOHN WITHERSPOON, D. D. L. L. D. *President of said College, by* JOHN RODGERS, D. D. *Senior Minister of the United Presbyterian Churches, in the city of New-York.*

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MATTHEW, XXV. 21.

"*His Lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful Servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*"

THE doctrine of a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, lies deep at the foundation of our holy religion: It is a doctrine perfectly conſonant to reaſon, and ſupported by it; and is either aſſerted, or juſtly taken for granted, in every page of the ſacred oracles. This is the immortality, for the bleſſedneſs of which we became incapacitated, by our apoſtacy from God; and that, for the enjoyment of which, it is one great deſign of the religion of Jeſus Chriſt to prepare us. The whole frame of this religion is wiſely calculated for this end. Among the many evidences of theſe truths, we may appeal to the diſcourſes of our Divine Maſter; and particularly to this, of which our text is a part.

In the preceding chapter, he had given his disciples an instructive discourse on the certainty and solemnity of his second coming. He continues the subject in this chapter, and enforces the great duty of preparation for it, by the parable of the ten virgins, from the first verse to the thirteenth; by the parable of the talents, from thence to the thirtieth verse; and by a more particular account of the process of the judgment of the great day, from thence to the end of the chapter.

The more immediate design of the parable of the talents, of which our text is a part, is to enforce the duty, and illustrate the happiness of being prepared for *giving up our account*, when he shall come to judge the world in righteousness. You may read it at your leisure. The "man travelling into a far country," in this parable means our Lord himself; who is the great head of his church, which is his family. The "servants," of whom we here read, mean all professing Christians; all who call themselves the servants of Christ, whatever their nation or denomination may be; though some suppose, the Ministers of the Gospel are more particularly intended.

By the *talents*, we are to understand the various gifts of Heaven, whether of a common or of a special nature. They include the bounties of Providence, such as health, strength, reason, genius, riches, honor, power, learning, reputation, the several advantages arising from our stations in life; and, together with these, those graces of the spirit that constitute the Christian temper. These are all so many talents put into our hands, to be improved for God, and the best interests of our fellow-creatures; and they are different to different persons. To one God gives more of these gifts or graces, and to another less; which is designed in the parable by the master's giving to one servant *five* talents, and to another *two*, and to another *one*.

By "the Lord of those servants coming, after a long time, to reckon with them," we are to understand that particular judgment which every one passes under at death, when their final states are determined: and also, and principally, our Lord's coming to judge the world in

righteouſneſs, at the laſt day, " When every one ſhall receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." At both theſe ſolemn periods, the faithful ſervant of Chriſt, whatever his character and ſtation in life may have been, ſhall be received with a " Well done, thou good and faithful ſervant; thou haſt been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

There are two things in theſe words that particularly deſerve our notice. The *character of those* who ſhall meet with the approbation of their Lord, in the great day of final awards; they have been *good* and *faithful* ſervants. And the *reward* ſuch ſhall receive, on that ſolemn occaſion, from the judge of quick and dead—They ſhall be each one received with a " Well done, thou good and faithful ſervant; thou haſt been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Agreeably to this view of my text, I ſhall,

I. Briefly conſider the character of the good and faithful ſervant of Chriſt.

II. The nature of that reward here promiſed to all ſuch in the great day of the Lord.

Let us enquire,

I. What is the character of the good and faithful ſervant of Chriſt?

I have already ſaid, this may be applied either to the diſciples of Chriſt in general, of whatever nation, denomination, or character in life they may be; or to the miniſters of the Goſpel in particular. I ſhall conſider the phraſe as including both. And it implies,

1. *Love to Christ and his service.*—A good ſervant always loves a good maſter. But it is neceſſary to obſerve here, that this love to Chriſt and his ſervice is not found in the heart of depraved man, in his natural ſtate. We are by nature alienated from God: deſtitute of every principle of love to him and his ſon Chriſt, in their true character. The apoſtolic deſcription of depraved human

nature is, "having the underſtanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, becauſe of the blindneſs of their hearts."*a* Hence ariſes the neceſſity of being "renewed in the ſpirit of our mind; and of putting on the new man, which after God is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs."*b* But one of the principal conſtituents of this new man is, love to God and his ſon Chriſt Jeſus. Love to God for his own divine excellence, as well as for the beneficence of his hand, to us—and love to Chriſt, as being the "brightneſs of his father's glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon."*c* The ſincere ſervant of Chriſt loves both his perſon and his character. His ſoul is pleaſed with him, as he is exhibited in the oracles of truth. "He is the chief among ten thouſand, and altogether lovely in his eſteem.*d* He loves alſo his *ſervice:* He eſteems his laws to be altogether equal and juſt.—This is the native effect of his love to his perſon and his government: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous."*e* The love we bear to the perſon of Chriſt, in proportion to its prevalence, will not only induce us to obedience, but render that obedience eaſy and delightful—We delight to oblige thoſe whom we love.

2. The good and faithful ſervant of Chriſt *loves his fellow ſervants*—He conſiders them as children of the ſame common father with himſelf: and we read, that "every one that loveth him who begat, loveth him alſo who is begotten of him."*f* He conſiders them as redeemed by the ſame precious blood of Chriſt; and as the ſubjects of the ſame ſanctifying and comforting influences of the ſpirit of grace, which are the common privilege of every true Chriſtian; for "If any man have not the ſpirit of Chriſt, he is none of his."*g* He conſiders them as engaged in the ſame common cauſe with himſelf; the advancement of the kingdom of Chriſt, and the illuſtration of the honor of God in our world. Theſe are the great ends the good and faithful ſervants of Chriſt have in view, however they may

a Eph. iv. 18. *b* ver. 23, 24. *c* Heb. i. 3. *d* Song. v. 10, 16. *e* 1 John v. 3. *f* 1 John v. 1. *g* Rom. viii. 9.

differ in ſome of the modes of purſuing them. Yet this difference does not forfeit their love, or deſtroy their charity for each other. If the perſon whoſe character I deſcribe, cannot agree to agree with his brethren, in denomination, or mode of worſhip, he will agree to differ with them—He will agree they ſhould think and act for themſelves, in matters of ſuch infinite concern; a privilege he juſtly claims to himſelf. And in how many things ſoever the diſciples of Chriſt may differ in matters of leſſer moment, they will all agree in loving their Maſter, his honor, his truth, and his ſervice—They will agree in adorning their profeſſion in all godlineſs of converſation.

Again—The good and faithful ſervant conſiders his fellow-diſciples as in the ſame vale of tears, and in the ſame ſtate of imperfection and trial with himſelf; and, therefore, that both they and he ſtand in need of mutual ſympathy, charity, and forbearance, one towards another. In a word, he conſiders them as heirs of the ſame future glory with himſelf; as "travelling to the ſame city, which hath foundations, whoſe builder and maker is God;" and that, therefore, they ought not to differ by the way.

Of ſuch importance is this brotherly love, in the eſtimation of our Lord, that he not only enjoins it upon his diſciples as their duty, but as their diſtinguiſhing and characteriſtic duty; that duty which more ſtrongly marks their character as his diſciples than almoſt any other; and that by which they are eſpecially to diſtinguiſh themſelves from the men of the world. You, therefore, hear him ſay, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye alſo love one another. By this ſhall all men know that ye are my diſciples, if ye have love one to another."*a*

3. *Diligence in his Lord's work*, is another ingredient in the character of the good and faithful ſervant. You will eaſily perceive the abſurdity of a good, and at the ſame time a *ſlothful* ſervant, in common life; and it is ſtill more ſo in the caſe before us. We all have our work in life aſſigned us, in the courſe of a wiſe Providence: and

a John xiii. 34, 35.

this is two fold, our general buſineſs as men and Chriſtians, and the ſpecial buſineſs of our reſpective ſtations. Both theſe are fruitful of a variety of duties, too numerous to be recited in this place—They embrace the whole compaſs of duty, both moral and poſitive, that we owe to our God, our neighbour, or ourſelves. Nor is there a ſingle character we ſuſtain, or relation we bear, in either of thoſe views, but what is the ſource of important duties. And if you conſider the variety and multiplicity of theſe relations and connexions, you will readily perceive theſe duties muſt be numerous, as well as important. But all theſe are ſo many claims on the diligence of the ſervants of Chriſt; ſo many obligations on them to be "not ſlothful in buſineſs, but fervent in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord."*a* We muſt be diligent too, that one duty may not interfere with another, for every thing is beautiful in its ſeaſon.

Again—Diligence is implied in the idea of *faithfulneſs;* for the ſervant cannot be faithful who is not diligent. No man ever employed a ſervant to run idle; nor can any thing be more contrary to the deſign for which Heaven has made us, than a life of ſloth and idleneſs, unleſs it be a life of open and undiſguiſed prophaneneſs. The author of our lives has ſufficiently marked the great end for which he made us, upon the active powers with which he has endowed us—And this diligence is to be particularly employed in the diſcharge of the duties of our ſeveral ſtations in life. This is one way, among others, by which we are to bring forth fruit to the honor of our Lord. "And herein," ſaith our Saviour, "is my father glorified, that you bear much fruit; ſo ſhall ye be my diſciples."*b*

4. The good and faithful ſervant *has a ſincere regard to his maſter's honor.* This is the end at which he wiſhes and ſtudies to aim in all his actions: agreeably to the Divine command, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatſoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."*c* And in this the ſervant of Chriſt accords with his maſter: the great end of whoſe incarnation, atonement, and interceſſion, on the behalf of ſinners, was, the illuſtration of God's declarative glory. He

a Romans xii. 11. *b* John xv. 8. *c* 1 Cor. x. 31.

undertook the vindication of the character and government of God, from the contempt ſin had caſt upon them; and in this he fully ſucceeded, and appeals to his father, that ſo he had done—"I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finiſhed the work which thou gaveſt me to do."*a* You will perceive, then, that to aim at the honor of God, as the higheſt end of all our actions, is, in a capital inſtance, to have the "ſame mind in us, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus, our Lord."*b* The true ſervant of Chriſt regards the honor both of his character and of his perſon. By the honor of Chriſt's character, I mean his honor as mediator; particularly as the great atonement for ſin, and as our interceſſor at his father's right hand. But to honor Chriſt under this character, in a proper manner, is not only to profeſs our firm faith in theſe doctrines, but to accept him as the Lord our righteouſneſs; it is to truſt in the merit of his atonement, as the ſole ground of our acceptance in the ſight of of God—Thus the good and faithful ſervant of Chriſt puts the higheſt honor in his power upon him, in the character of a Saviour. He practically riſks his very ſalvation on his ability, ſuitableneſs, and willingneſs to ſave him.

I ſhall mention but one ingredient more in the character I am at preſent illuſtrating, and that is,

5. *Faithfulness* in the diſcharge of the duties of life. The character under which our text repreſents the ſervants of Chriſt, is that of *ſtewards*, with whom their Lord had entruſted his goods; to ſome he gave more, and to others leſs, to trade withal. But the Apoſtle tells us, "That it is required in ſtewards, that a man be found *faithful*."*c* And you will pleaſe to obſerve, our text expreſsly ſtiles the true diſciple of Chriſt, "a good and *faithful* ſervant."

This faithfulneſs conſiſts, principally, in a conſcientious ſincerity and diligence in filling up the duties of our ſeveral ſtations and characters in life. And the great rule by which we are to act, is the will of our Lord and Maſter.

Thus much for the character of the good and faithful ſervant.

a John xvii. 4. *b* Phil. ii. 5. *c* Cor. iv. 2.

Let us now proceed to enquire,

II. What is the nature of that reward promiſed in our text to all ſuch good and faithful ſervants?

And, as it is here deſcribed, it implies, principally, the four following things:

1. The *acceptance of their persons* with God.—This is implied in the character here given them, and repreſented in the parable, as given them by their Lord, when he calls them to give an account of their ſtewardſhip, *good* and *faithful servants*. And you will pleaſe farther to obſerve, they are not only acknowledged as good and faithful, but received with a "Well done, ye good and faithful ſervants." This, indeed, chiefly imports an approbation of their conduct; but it is no leſs expreſſive of the acceptance of their perſons.

But to eſtimate this bleſſing in a proper manner, it is neceſſary to recollect, that as ſinners, we had forfeited all right to this acceptance with God, and juſtly merited his ſevere diſpleaſure. That we deſerve nothing but indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh, from him, throughout an immortality of woe. Yea, that ſuch is the nature of the forfeiture we have made of the Divine favor; and ſuch the juſtice of the ſentence that binds us down to ſuffer his diſpleaſure, that it appears not to have been compatable with the honor of God, to reverſe the ſentence, and reſtore the ſinner to favor, without an adequate ſatisfaction. And the price paid for this bleſſing, the precious blood of the Son of God greatly contributes to enhance its value. But how rich the mercy, for an heir of Hell to become, in this way, "an heir of God, and a joint heir with Chriſt Jeſus!"

2. It implies the *approbation and acceptance of their services for God*, and his cauſe in the world. Every individual among them ſhall be received with a "Well done,[a] thou good and faithful ſervant, thou haſt been faithful over a few things." Language cannot expreſs the approbation of the great Judge of quick and dead, in ſtronger terms.

[a] The original word Ev, here rendered "well done," has a force that cannot be fully expreſſed in our language.

But did our time admit of conſidering the many imperfections that attend the very beſt ſervices performed, by the holieſt of our Lord's ſervants, for him, how deeply ſtained they are with guilt, it would ſerve, not a little, to illuſtrate the riches of that reward conferred upon them, in this acceptance of their ſervices for him. And this farther ſuggeſts, what it is of importance to attend to, that this acceptance of our perſons and ſervices, when we come to ſtand before unblemiſhed purity, is not of merit, but of grace, through the atonement and interceſſion of the Divine Mediator. "It is to the praiſe of the glory of his *grace*, that he makes us accepted in the beloved."*a* But it is nevertheleſs certain, for its being of grace.

This acceptance of our perſons and ſervices, is of itſelf a high reward, for all we have ever done, or can do, for God, while in this life, were there none other: but this is not all—for,

3. This reward implies *actual and superadded honours*, conferred upon the faithful ſervants of Chriſt, in the great day of God. This is the import of "Thou haſt been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things." What the nature of theſe honors ſhall be, we are not ſo clearly taught. Two things, however, ſeem to be plain reſpecting them, in the ſacred oracles, namely, That they ſhall bear ſome proportion to our faithfulneſs and diligence in our Lord's ſervice here—and, that they ſhall be great.

They ſhall bear ſome proportion to our diligence and faithfulneſs in our Lord's ſervice in this life. We read, "There is one glory of the ſun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the ſtars: for one ſtar differeth from another in glory—So alſo is the reſurrection of the dead."*b* Theſe words plainly point us to a difference in the degrees of that glory which ſhall be conferred on the ſeveral ſervants of Chriſt, in the day when he ſhall finiſh the mediatorial ſyſtem, by raiſing the dead, and judging the world in righteouſneſs. They ſhall differ as the ſun differs from the moon, and the moon from the ſtars,

a Epheſians i. 6. *b* 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42.

and the ſtars one from another. But the ground of this difference will be, the zeal, the diligence, and the faithfulneſs with which his ſervants have ſerved him in this life. I may not ſay their ſucceſs will have no influence on this difference of reward: for we read, "That they who turn many to righteouſneſs, ſhall ſhine as the ſtars, forever and ever."*a* But when we conſider that it is an act of mere ſovereignty in God, whether he will ſucceed the faithful labors of his ſervants, yea, or not, it is not ſo conſonant to our ideas of equity, to make it an equal ground of diſtinguiſhed honors, with thoſe things that are voluntary in us, as our faithfulneſs and diligence, in a great meaſure are. Beſides, this would be to weaken, if not to deſtroy, the encouragement to diligence and faithfulneſs, ariſing from thoſe promiſes of reward to them, ſo frequent in the oracles of truth; eſpecially as the moſt diligent and faithful ſervants of Chriſt, are not always the moſt ſucceſsful. And it farther deſerves our notice that the reward conferred, in our text, on the good ſervant, is founded, not on his *ſucceſs* but on his faithfulneſs; "Thou haſt been *faithful* over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things."

I ſhall only add, under this particular, that the parable of the ten pounds, entruſted by their Lord to the ten ſervants, which you have in the nineteenth chapter of the Goſpel by Luke, ſufficiently demonſtrates, that the rewards that ſhall be conferred on the ſervants of Chriſt at laſt, will not only differ in their degrees of honor, but that this honor ſhall bear a proportion to their diligence and faithfulneſs for him in this life. They each one receive done pound a piece, as you may perceive by reading the parable. Of theſe, one, by his diligence and faithfulneſs, had gained ten pounds, and he is made ruler over ten cities.—Another by his diligence, had gained five pounds, and he is made ruler over five cities.

You will pleaſe to obſerve, the ſums entruſted to theſe ſervants were the ſame; but the improvement is repre-

a Daniel xii. 3. *b* Epheſians i. 6.

ſented as different, and that the difference in the reward is proportioned to the difference in the improvement.

The loweſt degree, however, of this reward ſhall be very great to thoſe who receive it. This appears, from the images uſed in Scripture, to illuſtrate its nature. It is compared to, it is illuſtrated by, all the glories of royalty. Hence we read of "a *crown* of righteouſneſs,"*a* and of "a *crown of glory*, that fadeth not away,"*b* that ſhall be conferred upon all the ſincere diſciples of Chriſt. Of a *throne*, and their *ſitting upon* that throne; "To him that overcometh, will I grant to ſit with me on my throne, even as I alſo overcame, and am ſet down with my Father in his throne."*c* We alſo read of a *kingdom*, and their entering on the poſſeſſion of that kingdom: "Come ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."*d* Agreeably to this, the good and faithful ſervants of Chriſt are ſaid to be made *kings* and *priests* unto God.*e* But a throne, a crown, and a kingdom, are the ſummit of earthly grandeur, the utmoſt reach of human achievement. And yet theſe, all theſe, fall infinitely ſhort of the bleſſedneſs and honors in ſure reſerve for thoſe whoſe character I have deſcribed: for it is written, "Eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."*f*

4. The reward in our text includes the *moſt conſummate happineſs, in the immediate preſence and fruition of a God in Chriſt.* This is imported in that phraſe, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," Theſe are literally, "Joys unſpeakable, and full of glory." They include all that happineſs that is derived to the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, from the cleareſt knowledge of a God in Chriſt; from the moſt perfect conformity to him, and the fulleſt enjoyment of him. By the *clearest* knowledge of a God in Chriſt, I do not mean a *perfect* knowledge of him; for "Who, by ſearching, can find out God, or know the Almighty to perfection?"*g* But I mean the fulleſt know-

a 2 Tim. iv. 8. *b* 1 Pet. v. 4. *c* Rev. iii. 21. *d* Matt. xxv. 34. *e* Rev. i. 6. *f* 1 Cor. ii. 9. *g* Job xi. 7.

ledge of him, that the then enlarged, and daily enlarging capacity can poſſibly receive; and which, when compared with our preſent knowledge, will be in a ſenſe perfect. The clearneſs, preciſion, extent, and ſatisfactory nature of this knowledge, are expreſſed, in Scripture, by "ſeeing no more darkly through a glaſs, but face to face; and knowing even as alſo we are known."*a* And by the ſtrong expreſſive phraſe of "ſeeing God's face."*b*

This knowledge of God, eſpecially as ſhining in the face of Chriſt, is one principal ſource of that conſummate happineſs, enjoyed by glorified ſpirits. They know him as *their* God and portion, and as ſuch their delightful experience recognizes and realizes him. That is an inſtructive and emphatical phraſe, as it lies in the original, Rev. xxi. 3. laſt clauſe—which literally rendered, runs thus, "And God himſelf ſhall be with them, their God;" that is, exhibiting and manifeſting himſelf to them, as their God, in all the ways that their ſouls, now arrived at the maturity of their exiſtence, both in a natural and moral view, can poſſibly admit. Every power of the matured mind ſhall be an avenue, through which bleſſedneſs ſhall flow into it, from God, the fountain of bleſſedneſs, throughout an unwaſting immortality.

I may not, I dare not undertake to deſcribe the nature of this happineſs. I ſhall only obſerve reſpecting it, that our text ſtiles it "the joy of our Lord"—"Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord"—This, no doubt, means the joy of our Lord Chriſt.

It is the joy of our Lord, *because it has been purchased by him.* This reflects a peculiar glory upon it, in the eſtimation of the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect; it infuſes a divine and exquiſite reliſh into it—to this accords their ſong to him, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the ſeals thereof: for thou waſt ſlain, and haſt *redeemed us to God by thy blood*, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."*c*

Again—It is the joy of our Lord, *because Christ, our Lord, has taken possession of it in the name of his people*—

a 1 Cor. xiii. 12. *b* Rev. xxii. 6. *c* Rev. v. 9.

Some of his laſt words to his diſciples were. "I go to prepare a place for you."*a* He roſe from the dead, and aſcended to glory, not in the character of a private perſon, but as the covenant head and repreſentative of his people —This is the character in which "he has entered into Heaven, as the forerunner for us."*b*

It is alſo the joy of our Lord, becauſe it is *derived from God, to the happy ſubjects thereof, through Jeſus Chriſt*, as the *bond of their union with him*, and the *medium of their intercourse with him*—And this will continue to be the caſe throughout a bleſſed immortality.

And, laſtly, it is the joy of our Lord, becauſe it is a joy *of the same kind with that which the glorified human nature of our Lord himself shares;* ſo far as they ſhall be capable of it—What leſs than this can be the import of that ſtrong phraſe, "Heirs of God, and *joint heirs* with Chriſt."*c* Nor is this all, they ſhall enjoy it in the ſame manſions of bleſſedneſs, which he himſelf inhabits. This is his promiſe to them, "I will come again, and receive you unto myſelf, that *where* I am, there ye may be alſo."*d* And his availing prayer for them is, "Father, I will, that they alſo whom thou haſt given me, *be with me where I am*, that they may behold my glory which thou haſt given me."*e* Agreeably to which, we read, "They ſhall ever be *with* the Lord."*f*

And now from all this, you will not heſitate to conclude, that this joy muſt be a compleat and an everlaſting joy. And, what can it be more?

My brethren, you will eaſily perceive this ſubject teaches, us the nature of the religion of Jeſus Chriſt. It forms its happy ſubjects to a proper temper and a proper conduct towards God and their neighbors. It makes them good and faithful ſervants to their Maſter, who is in Heaven. It teaches them their duty, and inclines and enables them to comply with it. Its doctrines and precepts, its promiſes and threatenings, are powerful principles of action.

a John xiv. 2. *b* Heb. vi. 20. *c* Rom. viii. 17. *d* John xiv. 3. *e* John xvii. 24. *f* 1. Theſſ. iv. 17.

Thus it is that divine truth ſanctifies the human heart, agreeably to our Lord's prayer, "Sanctify them through the truth; thy word is truth."*a*

You will farther obſerve, this religion not only teaches us our duty, and forms us to it, but rewards us, in the moſt glorious manner, for this our very duty—Rewards us with an immortality of bleſſedneſs, in the full enjoyment of the Father of our Spirits. How grand, intereſting, and dignified the ſcenes it opens beyond the grave!

Do any of thoſe ſyſtems of morality, which the ſons of infidelity wiſh to eſtabliſh, independent of the ſacred Scriptures, furniſh ſuch motives to virtue? Motives ſo rational and ſo calculated to influence? It is revelation alone that puſhes its incentives beyond the grave; that puſhes them home to the inmoſt feelings of the human heart; that embraces every ſpring of action, even the moſt ſecret; and touches them in the moſt tender, juſt, and energetic manner.

Again—This ſubject ſuggeſts matter of great encouragement to the people of God, and eſpecially to the miniſters of Chriſt, to be faithful and diligent in the work aſſigned them in life. Our Lord marks, with an omniſcient eye, all our conduct towards him; and while he reprehends our ſloth and unfaithfulneſs, he encourages and rewards our meaneſt ſervices for him. "A cup of cold water given to a diſciple, in the name of a diſciple," he aſſures us, "ſhall in no wiſe loſe its reward." *b* Let us, then, ſhake off our ſloth: let us up and be doing: Our work is great; our time is ſhort, and our reward glorious. Nor is there a ſingle Chriſtian, however private his ſtation, or obſcure his character, but what may, ſome how or other, ſerve the intereſts of his Lord in the world. This he may do by a conſcientious diſcharge of the duties of the devout, but eſpecially of the duties of the ſocial life. This will exhibit religion in a juſt point of light to the ſurrounding world, and glorify our Father, who is in Heaven.

They may alſo be uſeful in and by the duty of prayer; ſecret and family prayer. Our God is a God who hears

a John xvii. 17. *b* Matt. xx. 40.

prayer ; and he, no doubt, ſheds many a bleſſing on his miniſters, on his church, on the commonwealth, and on the world, in anſwer to the prayers of his humble, though obſcure friends. " Therefore, my beloved brethren, ſeeing God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love"—" Let us be ſtedfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, foraſmuch as we know our labour is not in vain in the Lord."

But it is time I ſhould haſten to obſerve, that this ſubject ſtrongly applies to the occaſion of my addreſſing you this day—The death of that venerable man of God, who preſided, with ſo much dignity, over this inſtitution for twenty-ſix years.

This great man was deſcended from a reſpectable parentage; which had long poſſeſſed a conſiderable landed property in the eaſt of Scotland. His father was miniſter of the pariſh of Yeſter, a few miles from Edinburgh, where he was born on the fifth day of February, 1722.*a* This worthy man was eminent for his piety, his literature and for a habit of extreme accuracy in all his writings and diſcourſes. This example contributed not a little to form in his ſon that taſte and that love of accuracy, united with a noble ſimplicity, for which he was ſo diſtinguiſhed through his whole life. He was ſent, very young to the

a Dr. Witherſpoon was lineally deſcended from that eminent man of God, the Rev. Mr. John Knox, whom Dr. Robertſon ſtiles, " The prime inſtrument of ſpreading and eſtabliſhing the reformed religion in Scotland." The genius, learning, piety, zeal, and intrepidity of this great man, rendered him ſingularly qualified for the diſtinguiſhed part he bore in that intereſting event. It is recorded of Mary, Queen of Scots, that ſhe ſaid, " She was more afraid of John Knox's prayers, than of an army of ten thouſand men." Worn out by inceſſant labors, he died on the 27th day of November, 1572, in the 67th year of his age. The Earl of Morton, then Regent of Scotland, who attended his funeral, pronounced his eulogium in a few words; the more honorable for Mr. Knox, ſays the above hiſtorian, as they came from one whom he had often cenſured, with peculiar ſeverity, " Here lies HE who never feared the face of man." Mr. Knox's daughter Elizabeth married the famous Mr. John Welſh, who ſtrongly reſembled his father in law in genius, character, and uſefulneſs in the church: And in this line Dr. Witherſpoon deſcended from this honorable anceſtry.

public ſchool at Haddington: His father ſpared neither expence nor pains in his education. There he ſoon acquired reputation for his aſſiduity in his ſtudies, and for a native ſoundneſs of judgment, and clearneſs and quickneſs of conception among his ſchool-fellows: many of whom have ſince filled the higheſt ſtations in the literary and political world.

At the age of fourteen he was removed to the univerſity of Edinburgh. Here he continued, attending the different profeſſors, with a high degree of credit, in all the branches of learning, until the age of twenty-one, when he was licenſed to preach the goſpel. In the theological hall, particularly, he was remarked for a moſt judicious taſte in ſacred criticiſm, and for a preciſion of idea and perſpicuity of expreſſion rarely attained at that early period.

Immediately on his leaving the univerſity, he was invited to be aſſiſtant miniſter with his father, with the right of ſucceſſion to the charge. But he choſe rather to accept an invitation from the pariſh of Beith, in the weſt of Scotland. Here he was ordained to the work of the goſpel miniſtry, and ſettled with the univerſal acquieſcence, and even with the fervent attachment of the people: A circumſtance which, under the patronage that unhappily exiſts in that church, is but too rarely the caſe in the ſettlement of their clergy. His character as a preacher, which rendered him ſo acceptable and popular, will come more naturally before us in another place. Let it ſuffice to remark here, that always intereſting and inſtructive in the pulpit, he was aſſiduous in the diſcharge of every parochial duty when out of it. And his preaching generally turned on thoſe great, diſtinguiſhing and practical truths of the goſpel, which, in every Chriſtian country, moſt affect and attach the hearts of the great body of the people.

From Beith he was, after a few years, tranſlated to the large and flouriſhing town of Paiſly, ſo celebrated for its various and fine manufactures.—Here he reſided in the height of reputation and uſefulneſs; and riveted in the affections of his people, and his fellow citizens when he was called to the preſidency of this college.

During his reſidence at Paiſly, he was invited to Dublin, in Ireland, to aſſume the charge of a numerous and reſpectable congregation in that city. He was alſo called to Rotterdam, in the Republic of the United Provinces—and to the town of Dundee, in his own country. But he could not be induced to quit a ſphere of ſuch reſpectability, comfort, and uſefulneſs. He rejected alſo, in the firſt inſtance, the invitation of the truſtees of this college. He thought it almoſt impoſſible for him to break connections at home, that had been ſo long endeared to him—to violate all the attachments and habits of the female part of his family—to leave the ſcene of his happineſs and honor—and in his middle career, to bury himſelf, as he apprehended, in a new and diſtant country.

But warmly urged by all thoſe friends whoſe judgment he moſt reſpected, and whoſe friendſhip he moſt eſteemed—and hoping that he might repay his ſacrifices, by greater uſefulneſs to the cauſe of the Redeemer, and to the intereſts of learning, in this new world—and knowing that this inſtitution had been conſecrated, from its foundation, to thoſe great objects to which he had devoted his life, he finally conſented, on a ſecond application, to wave every other conſideration, to croſs the ocean, and to take among us that important charge to which he had been called, with the concurrent wiſhes, and the higheſt expectations of all the friends of the college. *a* Their expectations have not been diſappointed. Its reputation and ſucceſs, under his adminiſtration, have been equal to our moſt ſanguine hopes.

a Dr. Witherſpoon arrived with his family at Princeton in the month of Auguſt, 1768. He was the ſixth Preſident of the College, ſince its foundation in the year 1746. His predeceſſors were, the Rev. Meſſrs. Jonathan Dickenſon, Aaron Burr, Jonathan Edwards, Samuel Davies, and Dr. Samuel Finley—Men deſervedly celebrated for genius, learning, and piety. Mr. Dickenſon and Mr. Edwards were advanced in life when choſen to the preſidency.

Not long before Dr. Witherſpoon left Scotland, and while in ſuſpence reſpecting his duty, a gentleman, poſſeſſed of a conſiderable property, an old bachelor, and a relation of the family, promiſed to make him his heir, if he would not go to America.

Almoſt the firſt benefit which it received, beſides the eclat, and the acceſſions of ſtudents, procured to it by the fame of his literary character, was the augmentation of its funds. The college has never enjoyed any reſources from the ſtate. *a* It was founded, and has been ſupported wholly by private liberality and zeal. And its finances, from a variety of cauſes, were in a low and declining condition, at the period when Dr. Witherſpoon arrived in America. But his reputation excited an uncommon liberality in the public; and his perſonal exertions, extended from Maſſachuſetts to Virginia, ſoon raiſed its funds to a flouriſhing ſtate. The war of the revolution, indeed, afterwards, proſtrated every thing, and almoſt annihilated its reſources; yet we cannot but with gratitude recollect, how much the inſtitution owed, at that time, to his enterprize and his talents.

But the principal advantages it derived, were from his literature; his ſuperintendancy; his example as a happy model of good writing; and from the tone and taſte which he gave to the literary purſuits of the college.

In giving the outlines of the character of this great man, for I attempt no more, I ſhall begin with obſerving, that perhaps his principal merit appeared in the pulpit. He was, in many reſpects, one of the beſt models on which a young preacher could form himſelf. It was a ſingular felicity to the whole college, but eſpecially to thoſe who had the profeſſion of the miniſtry in view, to have ſuch an example conſtantly before them. Religion, by the manner in which it was treated by him, always commanded the reſpect of thoſe who heard him, even when it was not able to engage their hearts. An admirable textuary, a profound theologian, perſpicuous and ſimple in his manner; an univerſal ſcholar, acquainted deeply with human nature; a grave, dignified, and ſolemn ſpeaker, he brought all the advantages derived from theſe ſources to the illuſtration and enforcement of divine truth. Though not a fervent

a Since this ſermon was delivered, the college has been favored with a handſome donation from the Legiſlature of New-Jerſey.

and animated orator, *a* he was always a ſolemn, affecting, and inſtructive preacher. It was impoſſible to hear him without attention, or to attend to him without improvement. He had a happy talent at unfolding the ſtrict and proper meaning of the ſacred writer, in any text from which he choſe to diſcourſe: at concentrating and giving perfect unity to every ſubject which he treated; and preſenting to the hearer the moſt clear and comprehenſive views of it. His ſermons were diſtinguiſhed for their judicious and perſpicuous diviſions—for mingling profound remarks on human life, along with the illuſtration of divine truth—and for the lucid order that reigned through the whole. In his diſcourſes, he loved to dwell chiefly on the great doctrines of divine grace, and on the diſtinguiſhing truths of the goſpel. Theſe he brought, as far as poſſible, to the level of every underſtanding, and the feeling of every heart. He ſeldom choſe to lead his hearers into ſpeculative diſcuſſions, and never to entertain them by a mere diſplay of talents. All oſtentation in the pulpit, he viewed with the utmoſt averſion and contempt. During the whole of his preſidency, he was extremely ſolicitous to train thoſe ſtudious youths, who had the miniſtry of the goſpel in view, in ſuch a manner, as to ſecure the greateſt reſpectability, as well as uſefulneſs, in that holy profeſſion. It was his conſtant advice to young preachers, never to enter the pulpit without the moſt careful preparation. It was his ambition and his hope, to render the ſacred miniſ-

a A peculiar affection of his nerves, which always overcame him when he allowed himſelf to feel very fervently on any ſubject, obliged him, from his earlieſt entrance on public life, to impoſe a ſtrict reſtraint and guard upon his ſenſibility. He was, therefore, under the neceſſity of ſubſtituting gravity and ſeriouſneſs of manner, in public ſpeaking, in the room of that fire and warmth, of which he was well capable, by nature; and which he ſo much admired in others, when managed with prudence.

He never read his ſermons, nor uſed ſo much as ſhort notes, in the pulpit. His practice was, to write his ſermons at full length, and commit them to memory; but not confine himſelf to the preciſe words he had penned. He often took great liberties, in the delivery of his diſcourſes, to alter, add to, or abridge what he had written; but this never infringed upon the ſtricteſt accuracy.

try the moſt learned, as well as the moſt pious and exemplary body of men in the Republic.

As a writer, his ſtile is ſimple and comprehenſive—his remarks judicious, and often refined—his information, on every ſubject which he treats, accurate and extenſive—his matter always weighty and important—cloſely condenſed, and yet well arranged and clear. Simplicity, perſpicuity, preciſion, comprehenſion of thought, and knowledge of the world, and of the human heart, reign in every part of his writings. Three volumes of eſſays, and two of ſermons, beſides ſeveral detached diſcourſes, already publiſhed—and treating chiefly on the moſt important and practical ſubjects in religion—have deſervedly extended his reputation, not only through Britain, Ireland and America, but through moſt of the proteſtant countries of Europe. His remarks on the nature and effects of the ſtage, enter deeply into the human heart. We find there many refined obſervations, after the example of the Meſſieurs de Port-Royal in France, not obvious to ordinary minds, but perfectly founded in the hiſtory of man, and the ſtate of ſociety. The pernicious influence of that amuſement on the public taſte and morals, was, perhaps, never more clearly elucidated. On the following intereſting ſubjects, the *nature and neceſſity of regeneration—Juſtification by free grace, through Jeſus Chriſt;* and *the importance of truth in religion*, or, the *connection that ſubſists between ſound principles and a holy practice*, there is, perhaps, nothing ſuperior in the Engliſh language. But Dr. Witherſpoon's talents were various. He was not only a ſerious writer, but he poſſeſſed a fund of refined humor, and delicate ſatire. A happy ſpecimen of this is ſeen in his *Eccleſiaſtical Characteriſtics*. The edge of his wit, in that performance, was directed againſt certain corruptions in principle and practice prevalent in the Church of Scotland. And no attack that was ever made upon them, gave them ſo deep a wound, or was ſo ſeverely felt. Dr. Warburton, the celebrated Biſhop of Glouceſter, mentions the Characteriſtics with particular approbation, and expreſſes his wiſh, that the Engliſh church, as ſhe needed one too, had likewiſe ſuch a corrector.

This may be the proper place to mention his general character, as a member of the councils and courts of the church, and the part particularly that he took in the eccleſiaſtical politics of his native country. The church of Scotland was divided into two parties, with reſpect to their ideas of eccleſiaſtical diſcipline. The one was willing to confirm, and even extend the rights of *patronage*—the other wiſhed, if poſſible, to abrogate, or at leaſt limit them, and to extend the rights and influence of the people, in the ſettlement and removal of miniſters. The latter were zealous for the doctrines of grace, and the articles of religion, in all their ſtrictneſs, as contained in their national confeſſion of faith. The former were willing to allow a greater latitude of opinion; and they preached in a ſtile that ſeemed to the people leſs evangelical, and leſs affecting to the heart and conſcience, than that of their opponents. In their concern, likewiſe, to exempt the clergy of their party from the unreaſonable effects of popular caprice, they too frequently protected them againſt the juſt complaints of the people. Theſe were ſtiled *moderate men*, while their antagoniſts were diſtinguiſhed by the name of the *orthodox*. Dr. Witherſpoon, in his church politics, early and warmly embraced the ſide of the orthodox. This he did from conviction, and a ſenſe of duty; and, by degrees, acquired ſuch an influence in their councils, that he was conſidered at length as their head and leader. Before he had acquired this influence, their councils were managed without union and addreſs, while the meaſures of the moderate party had, for a long time, been conducted by ſome of the greateſt literary characters in the nation. It had happened among the orthodox, as it often does among ſcrupulous and conſcientious men, who are not verſed in the affairs of the world, that each purſued inflexibly his own opinion, as the dictate of an honeſt conſcience. He could not be induced to make any modification of it, in order to accommodate it to the views of others. He thought that all addreſs and policy, was uſing too much management with conſcience. Hence reſulted diſunion of meaſures, and conſequent defeat—But Dr. Wither-

ſpoon's enlarged mind did not refuſe to combine *the wiſdom of the ſerpent with the harmleſsness of the dove.* He had, probably, the principal merit of creating among them union, and harmony of deſign; of concentrating their views, and giving ſyſtem to their operations. One day after carrying ſome important queſtions in the general aſſembly, againſt the celebrated Dr. Robertſon, who was at that time conſidered as the leader of the oppoſite party, the latter ſaid to him, in a pleaſant and eaſy manner, "I think you have your men better diſciplined than formerly." "Yes, replied Dr. Witherſpoon, by urging your politics too far, you have compelled us to beat you with your own weapons."

We have ſeen him in our own church judicatories in America, always upright in his views—remarkable for his punctuality in attending upon them—and able to ſeize at once, the right point of view on every queſtion—able to diſentangle the moſt embarraſſed ſubjects—clear and concluſive in his reaſonings—and from habit in buſineſs, as well as from a peculiar ſoundneſs of judgment, always conducting every diſcuſſion to the moſt ſpeedy and deciſive termination. The church has certainly loſt in him, one of her greateſt lights; and, if I may uſe the term in eccleſiaſtical affairs, one of her greateſt *politicians.*

Before entering on his talents as a preſident, ſuffer me, in a ſentence or two, to call to your mind his ſocial qualities. When not engaged in the great and ſerious buſineſſes of life, he was one of the moſt companionable of men. Furniſhed with a rich fund of anecdote, both amuſing and inſtructive, his moments of relaxation were as entertaining, as his ſerious ones were fraught with improvement. One quality remarkable, and highly deſerving imitation in him was, *his attention to young persons.* He never ſuffered an opportunity to eſcape him of imparting the moſt uſeful advice to them, according to their circumſtances, when they happened to be in his company. And this was always done in ſo agreeable a way, that they could neither be inattentive to it, nor was it poſſible to forget it.

On his domeſtic virtues I ſhall only ſay, he was an affectionate huſband, a tender parent, and a kind maſter; to which I may add, he was a ſincere and a warm friend.—But, I haſten to conſider him as a ſcholar, and a director of the ſyſtem of education in the college.

An univerſal ſcholar himſelf, he endeavored to eſtabliſh the ſyſtem of education in this inſtitution, upon the moſt extenſive and reſpectable baſis, that its ſituation and its finances would admit. Formerly, the courſe of inſtruction had been too ſuperficial: and its metaphyſics and philoſophy were too much tinctured with the dry and uninſtructive forms of the ſchools. This, however, was by no means to be imputed as a defect, to thoſe great and excellent men, who had preſided over the inſtitution before him; but rather to the recent origin of the country—the imperfection of its ſtate of ſociety—and to the ſtate of literature in it. Since his preſidency mathematical ſcience has received an extenſion, that was not known before in the American ſeminaries. He introduced into philoſophy, all the moſt liberal and modern improvements of Europe. He extended the philoſophical courſe to embrace the general principles of policy and public law: he incorporated with it ſound and rational metaphyſics—equally remote from the doctrines of fatality and contingency—from the barrenneſs and dogmatiſm of the ſchools—and from the exceſſive refinements of thoſe contradictory, but equally impious ſects of ſcepticiſm, who wholly deny the exiſtence of matter, or maintain that nothing but matter exiſts in the univerſe.

He laid the foundation of a courſe of hiſtory in the college—and the principles of taſte, and the rules of good writing, were both happily explained by him, and exemplified in his *manner*. The *ſtile* of *learning*, if you will allow me the phraſe, has been changed by him. Literary inquiries and improvements have become more liberal, more extenſive, and more profound. An admirable faculty for governing, and exciting the emulation of the young gentlemen under his care, contributed to give ſucceſs to all his deſigns, for perfecting the courſe of inſtruc-

tion. The numbers of men of diſtinguiſhed talents, in the different liberal profeſſions, in this country, who have receiv- the elements of their education under him, teſtify his ſervices to the college. Under his auſpices have been formed a large proportion of the clergy of our church; and to his inſtructions, America owes many of her moſt diſtinguiſhed patriots and legiſlators. *a*

Thus he proceeded, guiding with uncommon reputation and ſucceſs the courſe of education in this inſtitution, until the war of the American revolution ſuſpended his functions and diſperſed the college.

Here he entered upon a new ſcene, and appeared in a new character; widely differing from any, in which he had been heretofore preſented to the public. Yet, here alſo, he ſhone with equal luſtre; and his talents as a legiſlator and ſenator ſhewed the extent and the variety of the powers of his mind. There are few foreigners who can, with ſuch facility as he did, lay aſide their prejudices, and enter into the ideas and habits of a new country, and a new ſtate of ſociety. He became almoſt at once an American, on his landing among us, and in the unjuſt war which Great-Britain waged againſt us, he immediately adopted the views, and participated in the councils of the Americans. His diſtinguiſhed abilities ſoon pointed him out to the citizens of New-Jerſey, as one of the moſt proper delegates to that convention which formed their republican conſtitution. In this reſpectable aſſembly he appeared, to the aſtoniſhment of all the profeſſors of the law, as profound a *civilian*, as he had before been known to be a *philoſopher* and *divine*.

From the revolutionary committees and conventions of the ſtate, he was ſent, early in the year 1776, as a repreſentative of the people of New-Jerſey to the congreſs of United America; he was ſeven years a member of that illuſtrious body, which, under Providence, in the face of in-

a More than thirty members of the congreſs of United America, ſince the formation of that illuſtrious body, have been ſons of the college of New-Jerſey; and among theſe, ſome of their firſt characters for reputation and uſefulneſs. Her ſons have alſo filled, and now fill, ſome of the higheſt offices in different ſtates of the union.

numerable difficulties and dangers, led us on to the eſtabliſhment of our independence. Always firm in the moſt gloomy and formidable aſpects of public affairs, and always diſcovering the greateſt reach and preſence of mind, in the moſt embarraſſing ſituations.

It is impoſſible here to enter into all his political ideas. It is but juſtice however to obſerve, that on almoſt all ſubjects on which he differed from the majority of his brethren in congreſs, his principles have been juſtified by the reſult. I ſhall ſelect only one or two examples. He conſtantly oppoſed the expenſive mode of ſupplying the army *by commission*, which was originally adopted; and combated it, until after along experience of its ill effects, he, in conjunction with a few firm and judicious aſſociates, prevailed to have it done by contract. *a*

He oppoſed, at every emiſſion after the firſt or ſecond, and even hazarded his popularity for a time by the ſtrenuouſneſs of his oppoſition, that paper currency which gave ſuch a wound to public credit, and which would have defeated the revolution, if any thing could. *b*

In the formation of the original confederation, he complained of the jealouſy and ambition of the individual ſtates, which where not willing to entruſt the general government, with adequate powers for the common intereſt. He then pronounced inefficacy upon it. But he complained and remonſtrated in vain. *c*

a Congreſs at firſt ſupplied the army by allowing a certain commiſſion per cent. on the monies that the commiſſioners expended. This invited expence. At length they were induced to agree to the mode by contract; or allowing to the purchaſer a certain ſum per ration.

b Inſtead of emiſſions of an unfunded paper, beyond a certain quantum, Dr. Witherſpoon urged the propriety of making loans, and eſtabliſhing funds for the payment of the intereſt; which in the temper of the public mind, he thought could then have been eaſily effected. America has ſince regretted that ſhe had not purſued that policy. The doctor afterwards, at the inſtance of ſome of the very gentlemen who oppoſed him in congreſs, publiſhed his ideas on the nature, value and uſes of money, in one of the moſt clear and judicious eſſays that, perhaps, was ever written on the ſubject.

c He particularly remonſtrated againſt the tardy, inefficient and faithleſs manner of providing for the public exigencies and debts by

Over-ruled however, at that time, in theſe and in other objects of importance, he had the ſatisfaction of living to ſee America revert, in almoſt every inſtance, to his original ideas—Ideas founded on a ſound and penetrating judgment, and matured by deep reflection, and an extenſive obſervation of men and things. But I forbear to trace his political career farther; and ſhall only add here, that while he was thus engaged in ſerving his country in the character of a *civilian*, he did NOT lay aſide his *miniſtry*. He gladly embraced every opportunity of preaching, and of diſcharging the other duties of his office, as a goſpel miniſter. This he conſidered as his higheſt character, and honor in life.

The college having been collected as ſoon as poſſible after its diſperſion, inſtruction was recommenced under the immediate care of the vice-preſident. *a* Dr. Witherſpoon's name, however, continued to add celebrity to the inſtitution; and it has fully recovered its former reputation.

The glorious ſtruggle for our liberties drawing to an honorable period, and the doctor feeling age advancing upon him, was deſirous of reſigning his place in congreſs; and would have fain retired, in a meaſure from the burdens of the college.

requiſition on the ſeveral ſtates. He inſiſted on the propriety and neceſſity, of the government of the union holding in its own hands the entire regulation of commerce, and the revenues that might be derived from that ſource. Theſe he contended would be adequate to all the wants of the United States, in a ſeaſon of peace.

a The reverend Dr. Samuel S. Smith, who was unanimouſly choſen Dr. Whitherſpoon's ſucceſſor, on the ſixth day of May, 1795. This gentleman's character needs no eulogium in this place. His ſeveral publications, and particularly his ingenious eſſay on "The cauſes of the variety of complexion and figure of the human ſpecies," delivered before the Philoſophical Society, in Philadelphia, February 28th, 1787, afford ſufficient teſtimony of his genius and learning. The laſt mentioned work has diſtinguiſhed him in the eſtimation of the literati, both in Europe and America. As ſoon as it made its appearance in Europe, it was read with avidity—it ſhortly paſſed under more editions than one in Great-Britian—it was tranſlated into the French language, and publiſhed, with great eclat, at Paris—and has been ſince tranſlated into the German language, and publiſhed with annotations, by a profeſſor of moral philoſophy, in one of the univerſities of that empire.

But notwithſtanding his wiſh for repoſe, he was induced, through his attachment to the inſtitution, over which he had ſo long preſided, once more to croſs the ocean to promote its benefit. The fruit of that voyage was not indeed anſwerable to our wiſhes; but we are not the leſs indebted to his enterprize and zeal.

After his return to this country, finding nothing to obſtruct his entering on that retirement, which was now become more dear to him; he withdrew, in a great meaſure, except on ſome important occaſions, from the exerciſe of thoſe public functions that were not immediately connected with the duties of his office, as preſident of the college, or his character as a miniſter of the goſpel.

Accuſtomed to order and regularity in buſineſs from his youth, he perſevered in his attention to them through his whole life. And I may add, there was nothing in which his punctuality and exactneſs were more ſacredly obſerved, than in the devotional exerciſes of the chriſtian life. Beſides the daily devotions of the cloſet, and the family, it was his ſtated practice to obſerve the laſt day of every year, with his family, as a day of faſting, humiliation and prayer: and it was alſo his practice, to ſet a-part days for ſecret faſting and prayer, as occaſion ſuggeſted.

Bodily infirmities began at length to come upon him. For more than two years before his death, he was afflicted with the loſs of ſight; which contributed to haſten the progreſs of his other diſorders. Theſe he bore with a patience, and even a cheerfulneſs, rarely to be met with, in the moſt eminent for wiſdom and piety. Nor would his active mind, and his deſire of uſefulneſs to the end, permit him, even in this ſituation, to deſiſt from the exerciſe of his miniſtry, and his duties in the college, as far as his health and ſtrength would admit. He was frequently led into the pulpit, both at home and abroad, during his blindneſs; and always acquitted himſelf with his uſual accuracy, and frequently, with more than his uſual ſolemnity and animation. And we all recollect the propriety and dignity with which he preſided at the laſt commencement. He was bleſt with the uſe of his reaſoning powers to the very laſt.

At length, however, he ſunk under the accumulated preſſure of his infirmities; and on the 15th day of November, 1794, in the ſeventy third year of his age, he retired to his eternal reſt, full of honor and full of days—there to receive the plaudit of his Lord, " well done thou good and faithful ſervant, thou haſt been faithful over a few things, be thou ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

ESSAY

ON THE

CONNECTION

BETWEEN THE

DOCTRINE OF *JUSTIFICATION*

BY THE

IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST,

AND

HOLINESS OF LIFE:

With ſome Reflections upon the Reception which that Doctrine hath generally met with in the World.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

A LETTER to the Rev. Mr. *JAMES HERVEY*, Rector of Weſton-Favell, Northamptonſhire, Author of THERON AND ASPASIO.

ALSO, A

TREATISE ON *REGENERATION*, *&c.*

LETTER

TO THE

Rev. Mr. *JAMES HERVEY*, &c.

SIR,

WHEN Christ our Saviour was about to go to his Father, he told his disciples, If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but becauſe ye are not of the world, but I have choſen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. *I am persuaded, that by this, he did not only intend to forewarn the twelve of the offence which that generation would take at the ignominy of the cross, but also to intimate, that the case would be the same in all ages; that his doctrine would meet with great resistance and opposition, and that the temper and character of his real disciples would be very different from the spirit that would generally prevail in the world. This hath been continually verified in experience. For as many in the highest stations, and of highest repute for wisdom in the world, did set themselves against the gospel at its first publication, so even where there is a nominal profession of it, there is still an opposition to its doctrines, in their simplicity and purity, by the world, that is to say, those who have most sway in it, who are the most passionate admirers of its fashions, and the most assiduous prosecutors of its honors and pleasures.*

It may be also observed, that there is sometimes, perhaps even generally, a sovereignty of divine providence in the choice of the instruments employed in spreading the gospel. As, at first, twelve illiterate fishermen were chosen; so, often since that time, the weakest and most unlikely have been pitched upon, that our faith might not ſtand in the wiſdom of men, but in the power of God. *Hence it frequently happens, that it is not only difficult to make men believe the gospel, but even to persuade them to hear it. They are apt to despise and deride the message, because of the meanness of the messenger, or the homeliness of the terms in which it is delivered. This is particularly the case with the present age. From a certain love of ease, and luxury of mind, they despise and trample upon all instructions, which have not something pleasing and insinuating in their dress and form.*

You, Sir, are one of those happy few, who have been willing to consecrate the finest natural talents to the service of Christ in the gospel, and are not ashamed of his cross. You have been able to procure attention upon some subjects, from many who would hardly have given it to any other writer. This hath made me observe with particular attention, the effect of your last performance, Theron *and* Aſpaſio, *the character given to it, and the objections*

raised against it. And I have always found, that the most specious and plausible objection, and that most frequently made against the doctrine of justification by imputed righteousness, has been in this case, as indeed usually before, that it loosens the obligations to practice. This is what I have particularly applied myself to refute in the following essay, because I have rarely observed it done distinctly, and at full length, in any writer. And I have addressed it to you, as a testimony of my esteem of your excellent and useful writings, as a public declaration of my espousing the same sentiments as to the terms of our acceptance with God, and my ambition of contributing some small assistance to the support of the same glorious cause. It was also no small inducement to it, that thereby it might appear to all, that no external distinctions, or smaller differences, ought to be any hindrance to a cordial esteem and affection among the sincere servants of our common Master.

The greatest part of what follows was first delivered in two sermons; but it is now thrown into the form of an essay, lest the despised title of a sermon should offend some, and that it might the better admit of several additions, both in the body of the piece, and in the notes, which could not have been so properly delivered from a pulpit. Some of these regard the philosophical principles, which have of late been published among us, of which I propose, in a short time, a much fuller discussion, as there is no way in which the truths of the gospel are more perverted than by what the apostle Paul calls Philosophy and vain deceit, and oppositions of science falsely so called.

That your useful life may be prolonged, and that you may have the honor of contributing more and more to the conversion of sinners, and the edification and comfort of believers, is the earnest prayer of,

SIR,

Your most obedient

humble servant,

J. W.

AN ESSAY ON

JUSTIFICATION.

ALL the works and ways of God have ſomething in them myſterious, above the comprehenſion of any finite underſtanding. As this is the caſe with his works of creation and providence, there is no reaſon to expect it ſhould be otherwiſe in the aſtoniſhing method of the redemption of the world by Jeſus Chriſt. From this their myſterious nature, or rather from the imperfect meaſure and degree in which they are revealed to us, they are admirably fitted for the trial of our ingenuity, humility and ſubjection. They are all of them, when ſeriouſly and impartially enquired into, holy, juſt and good; but at the ſame time, not beyond the cavils and objections of men of prejudiced, perverſe and corrupt minds.

The apoſtle Paul, in his epiſtle to the Romans, among whom he had never been in perſon, at great length eſtabliſhes the fundamental doctrine of the goſpel, that ſinners are juſtified by the free grace of God, through the imputed righteouſneſs of a Redeemer. To this doctrine men do by nature make the ſtrongeſt oppoſition, and are, with the utmoſt difficulty, brought to receive and apply it. We may well ſay of it in particular, what the ſame apoſtle ſays of the truths of God in general, that "the natural man "doth not receive them*." It is therefore highly neceſſary to prevent or remove, as far as poſſible, the objections that may be brought againſt it by the art or malice of Satan,

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

who will, no doubt, bend the chief force of all his engines againſt this truth, knowing that the cordial reception of it is a ſure and effectual, and indeed the only ſure and effectual means of deſtroying his power and influence in the heart. Accordingly we find the apoſtle, in the ſixth chapter of the above-named epiſtle, and firſt verſe, ſuppoſes an objection made againſt this doctrine in the following terms, "What ſhall we ſay then? ſhall we continue in ſin, that grace may abound?" To which he anſwers, by rejecting the conſequence with the utmoſt abhorrence, and in the ſtrongeſt manner affirming it to be without any foundation.

From the introduction of this objection by the apoſtle, we may either infer, that there were, even in theſe early days, ſome who branded the doctrine of redemption by the free grace of God with this odious conſequence; or that he, by the inſpiration of the Almighty, did foreſee that there ſhould ariſe, in ſome future periods of the Chriſtian church, adverſaries who would attempt to load it with this imputation; or that the doctrine is indeed liable, on a ſuperficial view, to be abuſed to this unhappy purpoſe, by the deceitful hearts of men, who are wedded to their luſts. It is probable that all the three obſervations are juſt; and the two laſt render it a peculiarly proper ſubject for our attention and conſideration at this time, and in this age.

It is well known that there are many enemies of this doctrine, of different characters, and of different principles who all agree in aſſaulting it with this objection, That it weakens the obligations to holineſs of life, by making our juſtification before God depend entirely upon the righteouſneſs and merit of another. And ſo far, I think, we muſt join with the adverſaries of this doctrine, as to lay it down for a principle. That whatever belief or perſuaſion by its native and genuine tendency, weakens the obligations to practice, muſt be falſe. And I will alſo aſſert, in oppoſition to ſome modern infidels, (though ſome may think that my cauſe might avail itſelf of the contrary opinion) that a man's inward principle, or the perſuaſion of his mind, hath a neceſſary and unavoidable influence

upon his practice.* So that, if I am not able to shew, that justification through the imputed righteousness of Christ, is so far from weakening the obligations to holiness, that on the contrary, the belief and reception of it, as its necessary consequence, must make men greater lovers of purity and holiness, and fill them with a greater abhorrence of sin, than any other persuasion on the same subject, I am content to give up the cause.

I hope we may be indulged a candid hearing on this subject, as experience does not seem to be unfavorable to the doctrine I am assaying to defend. If it appeared in fact that its friends, upon a fair and just comparison, were more loose in their practice than their adversaries of any of the opposite opinions, it would be a strong prejudice against it; or rather, if this were always the case, it would be an unquestionable evidence of its falsehood. But doth not the contrary appear on the very face of the world? Are not the persons who profess to deny their own righteousness, and hope for justification through Christ, ordinarily the most tender and fearful of sinning themselves, and the most faithful and diligent in promoting the reformation of others? And do not all careless, profane and sensual livers, almost to a man, profess themselves enemies to this doctrine? I could almost appeal to any one who hath the least experience of, or commerce with the world, whether he would expect to find, upon a strict search and enquiry, the worship of God more constantly attended, the name of God more regularly called upon in families, children and servants more carefully instructed, and more dutifully governed, a greater freedom from levity, profanity, unchas-

* That is to say, So far as it can be applied to practice, and so far as it is real or prevalent above its opposite; for there are many truths of a religious nature which men think they believe sometimes, but which yet their corrupt passions often make them doubt of; and these doubts are nine parts in ten of their lives observant to their minds, as a vindication of their licentious practice: in some sense, such may be said to act in contradiction to their principles; but they are principles either not really believed, or, which is the same thing, not habitually recollected; and none can expect that men will act upon a principle, though once ever so firmly believed, if it be forgotten, or at the time of action entirely out of view.

tity, pride, malice, or insincerity of conversation, amongst the friends or enemies of this doctrine? So true is this, that they commonly have the appellation of the stricter sort given them, by which is certainly understood, at least an apparent strictness of life and manners *.

As therefore experience doth not hinder, or rather warrants us to affirm, that those who expect justification by free grace are, of all others, the most holy in their lives; I propose to shew, that it must be so, and that this is but the native fruit, and necessary consequence of their principles. What has induced me to this attempt, is not only the calumnies of enemies, but the weakness or treachery of professed friends. These last injure the truth often, in two different ways. Some speak in such a manner as to confirm and harden enemies in their opposition to it; they use such rash and uncautious expressions, as do indeed justify the objection which the apostle rejects with so great abhorrence; and, in the heat of their zeal against the self-righteous legalist, seem to state themselves as enemies, in every respect, to the law of God, which is holy, just and good. Others, on the contrary, defend it in such a manner, as to destroy the doctrine itself, and give such interpretations of the word of God, as, if they were just, and known to be so, the objection would never have been made, because there would not have been so much an occasion given to it †.

* I am not ignorant, that it is the usual refuge of those who are evidently dissolute in their own lives, to alledge, that there is indeed an appearance of this, but that it is no more than appearance, being all hypocrisy. It would be going out of the way to enter upon a large refutation of this slander. Therefore acknowledging, that, no doubt, whatever number of hypocrites there are in the world, and there are too many, they must herd amongst, or attach themselves to the society of the best part of it: I observe, that the general charge of hypocrisy is only thrown out at a venture, is a judging of the heart, and by the very supposition, contrary to appearances, justified, for the most part, by a steady perseverance. Whereas, usually the whole merit of those who bring the accusation, is that of being uniformly wicked, and not so much as professing what it was their indispensible duty both to have professed and practised.

† I have often thought, that there cannot be a stronger argument, that the explication commonly given by Calvinists, of the passages of

But of all the pretended Chriſtians, one ſort are worthy of the higheſt contempt, who, acknowledging the truth of this doctrine, call it dangerous, and are backward to teach or publiſh it, leſt it ſhould be abuſed. Would ſuch weak, half-thinking mortals, be wiſer than God? Hath he publiſhed it, and ſhall we throw a veil over it, to remedy the raſhneſs of his proceeding? Do the Scriptures reveal, and are we backward to "to teſtify the goſpel of the grace of "God?" All the works of God are capable of being abuſed; that this may be ſo likewiſe the apoſtle ſuppoſes. It is, however, not the leſs uſeful or important; only let us endeavor to vindicate it from the falſe charge of favoring or encouraging licentiouſneſs of life. This I would willingly do in ſuch a manner, as to aſſert while I defend it; to maintain the doctrine itſelf, while I ſhew not only its innocence, but its uſefulneſs in practice.

The words of the inſpired apoſtle are, "God forbid, "how ſhall we that are dead to ſin, live any longer there-"in?" In which he affirms, that the grace of God abounding in the goſpel, is ſo far from being an encouragement to ſin, that it deſtroys the power of ſin, and removes the inclination to it, ſo far as it prevails. The language is very ſtrong, "We that are dead to ſin."—It ſeems to put us in mind of the total effectual breach of relation between a dead man, and the objects with which he was formerly connected in life: they are nothing to him, nor he to them; he neither loves them, needs them, nor uſes them. So in proportion as the grace of God offered through Chriſt in the goſpel is received and applied, ſin is mortified in the heart; thus ſays the apoſtle Paul elſewhere, "God for-"bid that I ſhould glory, ſave in the croſs of our Lord "Jeſus Chriſt, by which the world is crucified unto me,

ſcripture on this ſubject, is juſt, than the apoſtle's ſuppoſition of an objection of this nature ariſing from it. For if the explication of ſome others, were ſuppoſed to be the obvious meaning of the text, and were ſubſtituted in its room, as all juſt definitions may be without inconvenience, the apoſtle's words, "What ſhall we ſay then? ſhall we con-"tinue in ſin that grace may abound?" would be quite unnatural and abſurd.

and I unto the world*." This, which is indeed the language of the Scripture throughout, is not merely denying the accusation, but establishing the contrary truth, the influence of this doctrine upon purity of heart and life, which we find the apostle also asserting in the middle of his reasoning upon the point, "Do we then make void the law "through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law†."

In the prosecution of this subject, it will be necessary, first, in a few words, to state that doctrine against which the objection is made. It may be delivered in Scripture-language thus, "That all have sinned, and come short of "the glory of God.—That every mouth must be stopped, "and all the world become guilty before God.—There- "fore by the deeds of the law, there shall be no flesh justi- "fied in his sight.—But we are justified freely by his grace, "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:—Whom "God hath set forth as a propitiation, through faith in his "blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins "that are past, through the forbearance of God.—Where "is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? "Nay, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude, "that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the "law.—Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might "abound; but where sin abounded, grace did much more "abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so "might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, "by Jesus Christ our Lord."

The doctrine asserted in the above and other passages of scripture may be thus paraphrased: that every intelligent creature is under an unchangeable and unalienable obligation, perfectly to obey the whole law of God: that all men proceeding from Adam by ordinary generation, are the children of polluted parents, alienated in heart from God, transgressors of his holy law, inexcusable in this transgression, and therefore exposed to the dreadful consequences of his displeasure; that it was not agreeable to the dictates of his wisdom, holiness and justice, to forgive their sins without an atonement or satisfaction: and therefore

* Gal. vi. 14. † Rom. iii. 31.

he raised up for them a Saviour, Jesus Christ, who, as the second Adam, perfectly fulfilled the whole law, and offered himself up a sacrifice upon the cross in their stead: that this his righteousness is imputed to them, as the sole foundation of their justification in the sight of a holy God, and their reception into his favor; that the means of their being interested in this salvation, is a deep humiliation of mind, confession of guilt and wretchedness, denial of themselves, and acceptance of pardon and peace through Christ Jesus, which they neither have contributed to the procuring, nor can contribute to the continuance of, by their own merit; but expect the renovation of their natures, to be inclined and enabled to keep the commandments of God, as the work of the Spirit, and a part of the purchase of their Redeemer. *

This short account of the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness will be further illustrated and explained in the progress of this discourse, intended to shew, that in those who do cordially embrace it, the obligations to holiness are not weakened, but strengthened and confirmed. For this purpose be pleased to attend to the following observations; in all of which I desire it may be remembered, even where not expressly mentioned, an opposition is intended between the principles and views of a believer in Christ, who rests his hope on his imputed righteousness, and those who act on any contrary principle.

* The intelligent reader will probably perceive, that I have expressed the above doctrine in such general terms, as not distinctly to take a part in the differences that are to be found among some authors, as to the way of explaining it, and particularly as to the nature of faith. The reason of my doing so is, that I would willingly rather reconcile, than widen these differences; and because it is my firm persuasion, that however some think it justest, or wisest, or safest, to express themselves one way, and some another, yet all who have a deep and real conviction, that they are by nature in a lost state, and under the wrath of God, and that there is no salvation in any other but in Christ, are, if they understood one another, at bottom, or at least in all things any way material, entirely of the same opinion. Accordingly the reader will, I hope, find that the reasoning in the following pages may easily be applied by them all without exception.

In the firſt place, he who expects juſtification by the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt, hath the cleareſt and ſtrongeſt conviction of the obligation of the holy law of God upon every reaſonable creature, and of its extent and purity. This will appear very evidently, if we conſider what it is that brings any perſon to a belief or reliſh of this doctrine. It muſt be a ſenſe of ſin, and fear of deſerved wrath. Let us ſearch out the cauſe by tracing the effects. Whence ariſes the fear of wrath, or apprehenſion of God's diſpleaſure? Only from a conviction of guilt. And what can produce a conviction of guilt, but a ſenſe of obligation? This is manifeſtly the doctrine of Scripture, which teaches us, that "by the law is the knowledge of ſin"—and that "the law is a ſchoolmaſter to bring us to Chriſt." Thoſe who have none at all, or a very imperfect ſenſe of the obligation of the divine law, will never have the leaſt eſteem of the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, which atones for their tranſgreſſion of it; it muſt appear to them to be fooliſhneſs: whereas thoſe who have a ſtrong conviction of the juſtice of the demand of the law, both eſteem and uſe the plea of their Saviour's merit. Such alſo have a ſtrong ſenſe of the extent and purity of the law of God, as well as its obligation in general. Whilſt others conſider nothing as ſin, but the groſſeſt and moſt notorious crimes, they are deeply ſenſible of the alienation of their hearts from God, whom they are bound ſupremely to love, and to whoſe glory they are obliged to be habitually and univerſally ſubſervient.

This conviction of the obligation of the divine law, ſo eſſentially connected with, or rather ſo neceſſarily previous to, an acceptance of the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt, is evidently founded upon the relation of man to God, as a creature to his Creator. This relation then continues, and muſt continue, unchangeable; therefore the obligation founded upon it muſt be unalienable; and all thoſe who have once been ſenſible of it, muſt continue to be ſo, unleſs we ſuppoſe them blinded to the knowledge of God as Creator, by the diſcovery of his mercy in Chriſt the Redeemer. But this is abſurd; for the ſubſequent relation of a ſinner to God, as forgiven and reconciled through Chriſt,

never can take away, nay, never can alter his natural relation as a creature, nor the obligation founded upon it. Neither can it be conceived as conſiſtent with the perfections of God, to abate the demands of his law; that is to ſay, a perfect conformity to his holy will.* Every the leaſt deviation from it, by tranſgreſſion, or neglect of duty, muſt ſtill be evil in itſelf, and muſt ſtill be ſeen, and eſteemed to be ſo by the God of truth, who cannot lie. Now, is there any thing in the goſpel that hath the leaſt tendency to leſſen the ſenſe of this obligation, after it hath been once diſcovered? Very far from it: on the contrary, all that Chriſt hath done for the ſalvation of ſinners, as its immediate conſequence, magnifies the law, and makes it honorable.

Perhaps it may be thought, that the releaſing a ſinner from the ſanction of the law, or the puniſhment incurred

* Since mention has been made of perfect conformity to the will of God, or perfect obedience to his law, as the duty of man, which is indeed the foundation of this whole doctrine, I think it neceſſary to obſerve, that ſome deny this to be properly required of man, as his duty in the preſent fallen ſtate, becauſe he is not able to perform it. But ſuch do not ſeem to attend either to the meaning of perfect obedience, or to the nature or cauſe of this inability. Perfect obedience is obedience by any creature, to the utmoſt extent of his natural powers. Even in a ſtate of innocence, the holy diſpoſitions of Adam would not have been equal in ſtrength and activity to thoſe of creatures of an higher rank: but ſurely to love God, who is infinitely amiable, with all the heart, and above all, to conſecrate all his powers and faculties, without exception, and without intermiſſion, to God's ſervice, muſt be undeniably the duty of every intelligent creature. And what ſort of inability are we under to pay this? Our natural faculties are ſurely as fit for the ſervice of God as for any baſer purpoſe: the inability is only moral, and lies wholly in the averſion of our hearts from ſuch employment. Does this then take away the guilt? Muſt God relax his law becauſe we are not willing to obey it? Conſult even modern philoſophers; and ſuch of them as allow there is any ſuch thing as vice, will tell you, that it lies in evil or miſplaced affections. Will then that which is ill in itſelf excuſe its fruits in any degree from guilt or blame? The truth is, notwithſtanding the loud charge of licentiouſneſs upon the truths of the goſpel, there is no other ſyſtem that ever I peruſed, which preſerves the obligation of the law of God in its ſtrength: the moſt part of them, when thoroughly examined, juſt amount to this, that men are bound, and that it is RIGHT and MEET and FIT that they ſhould be as good and as holy as they themſelves incline.

by pardon purchaſed and beſtowed, has this effect: and here it is, to be ſure, that men by their partial views, are apt to ſuppoſe the objection lies.

But let us only reflect, that the obligation to duty and obedience to the Creator, hath been ſeen by a believer in the ſtrongeſt light, and muſt continue to be ſenſible. Will he then be induced to act in the face of a perceived obligation, by an inſtance of unſpeakable mercy? Is this reaſonable to ſuppoſe? or rather, is it not ſelf contradictory and abſurd? It is ſo far from being true, that this mercy diſpoſes to obedience, as a peculiar and additional motive, as I ſhall afterwards ſhew more fully in its proper place. In the mean time, it is ſelf-evident, that it can be no hinderance. What leads us into error in this matter, is what happens ſometimes in human affairs. In a human government, mercy or a promiſe of impunity for paſt crimes, may enable, though even in that caſe, not incline a rebellious traitor to renew his wickedneſs. But this is a moſt unjuſt and partial view of the caſe, in which the very circumſtance is wanting upon which the chief ſtreſs ought to be laid. Human laws reach only outward actions, becauſe human knowledge is ſo imperfect, that it cannot diſcover the diſpoſition of the heart: and as all profeſſions are not ſincere, ſo kindneſs is often beſtowed on improper objects. This kindneſs, however, though it may diſcover the impropriety, it cannot cauſe it.

But make the ſimilitude complete, and ſee how it will lead us to determine. Suppoſe one who hath been in rebellion, deeply and inwardly convinced of the evil of rebellion, and his obligation to ſubmiſſion; ſuppoſe this conviction ſo ſtrong, that he confeſſeth the juſtice of the ſentence condemning him to die, which is very conſiſtent with a deſire of life: will a pardon offered or intimated to ſuch a perſon make him diſloyal? Is this its natural, nay, is it its poſſible effect? If it could be ſuppoſed to have any ſuch conſequence at all, it could only be in this diſtant way, that pardon ſeems to leſſen the ſenſe of a judge's diſpleaſure at the crime. But even this can have no place here, becauſe ſufficient care is taken to prevent any ſuch abuſe of it, by the ſubſtitution and vicarious ſufferings of a Mediator.

I cannot help obſerving here, that the ſimilitude above uſed will lead us to the diſcovery of one great cauſe of the objection againſt which I am reaſoning. It ariſes from that corruption of heart, and inward oppoſition to the law of God in its extent and purity, which is in all men by nature, and continues in all who are not renewed in the ſpirit of their minds. As they have a ſtrong tendency and inclination to tranſgreſs the law where they dare, they are ready to think, that the hopes of impunity muſt encourage every one to a bold violation of it. And no doubt this would be true, if there could be any real eſteem or cordial acceptance of the goſpel, without a previous conviction of the obligation of the law, and the guilt and demerit of every tranſgreſſor.* But ſuppoſing what is in truth the caſe with every believer, that there is a real and ſtrong conviction of the obligation of the law of God upon every rational creature, which cannot be taken away; to imagine that the mercy of God in pardoning ſinners for Chriſt's ſake will leſſen or weaken the ſenſe of this obligation, is a moſt manifeſt contradiction. On the contrary, ſin muſt needs have received a mortal blow, the love of it muſt neceſſarily have been deſtroyed, before pardon in this way could be ſought or obtained: ſo that the apoſtle might well ſay, "How ſhall we that are dead to ſin, live "any longer therein?"

In the ſecond place, he who believes in Chriſt, and expects juſtification through his imputed righteouſneſs, muſt have the deepeſt and ſtrongeſt ſenſe of the evil of ſin in itſelf. This is in a good meaſure included in, or an immediate conſequence of, what has been already mentioned. For the obligation of the law, as hinted above, is but very

* But this is impoſſible; for though there may be ſome ſort of fear of puniſhment, occaſioned by diſplays of divine power, where there is no true humiliation of mind, or genuine conviction of ſin; this is but like the impatient ſtruggles of a chained ſlave, inſtead of the willing ſubjection of a penitent child. There is ſtill in all ſuch an inward murmuring againſt the ſentence, as that of an unjuſt and rigorous tyrant, and not of a righteous judge. Therefore, though ſuch ſhould pretend to rely on the merits of Chriſt for pardon and deliverance, it is plainly not from their hearts, and therefore neither to the ſaving of their ſouls, nor to the reformation of their lives.

imperfect, if we consider it only as founded on the power of God, and the dependence of the creature, and not also on the holiness, justice, and goodness of the law itself. In the first sense, perhaps, it may be felt by the wicked in this world, at least, we are sure, it is felt by devils and damned spirits in a separate state. They know that they must suffer, because they will not obey. But where there is a complete sense of obligation, it implies a belief of the righteousness of the law, as well as the power of the lawgiver, of the equity, nay, the excellence of the commmand, as well as the severity of the sanction. All such not only believe that God will punish for sin, but that it is most just that he should do so, and that sin has richly deserved it.

It may therefore seem unnecessary to add any thing on this subject more than has been already said: but I have mentioned it by itself, because besides that sense of the obligation and purity of the law of God, which must pave the way to a sinner's acceptance of the righteousness of Christ, there is a discovery of the evil of sin, and its abominable nature, in every part of this "mystery of "godliness, God manifested in the flesh," and the truths founded upon it; so that the more these are believed, and the more they are attended to and recollected, the more must the believer be determined to hate and abhor every wicked and false way; every new view which he takes of the gospel of his salvation, every act of trust and confidence exerted upon it, must increase his horror of sin, and excite him to fly from it.

Let us consider a little what views are presented us of the evil of sin in the doctrine of Christ, and of him crucified. Here we see that a holy and just God would not forgive sin without an atonement. What a demonstration is this of its malignity, if carefully attended to, and kept constantly in our eye, as a part of our very idea of the Divine Nature! The difficulty in this case, is our partiality in our own cause; we are unwilling to think sin so very blame-worthy, because this is condemning ourselves; but, let us consider what views an all-wise and impartial God hath of it, and form ours upon his. And that we may not so much as once blasphemously imagine, that he

alſo is partial on his own ſide, let us remember that he is the God of love, who, by this very ſalvation, hath magnified his love in a manner that paſſeth knowledge. He ſhews his ſenſe of the evil of the crime, even whilſt he is contriving, nay, in the very contrivance of a proper way for the criminal's eſcape. He is not, ſo to ſpeak, ſetting forth the malignity of the offence, in order to juſtify the ſeverity of his own vengeance, but he is exerting his amiable attribute of mercy, and yet here muſt the evil of ſin appear.

Conſider, in a particular manner, upon this ſubject, the dignity and glory of the perſon who made this atonement. The value of the purchaſe may be ſeen in the greatneſs of the price; the evil of ſin in the worth of the propitiation. "For we are not redeemed with corrupti-"ble things, ſuch as ſilver and gold, but with the precious "blood of Chriſt, as of a Lamb without blemiſh and "without ſpot."* It was no leſs a perſon than the eternal and only begotten Son of God, who was before all worlds, the brightneſs of his Father's glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon, who ſuffered in our ſtead. Whoever conſiders the frequent mention in the ſacred oracles, of the glory and dignity of the perſon of Chriſt, muſt be ſatisfied that it is not without deſign; and none can truly reliſh or improve theſe truths, but ſuch as thence learn the evil of ſin, the immenſeneſs of that debt which required one of ſo great, nay, of infinite and inexhauſtible riches, to be able to pay it. A creature indeed behoved to ſuffer; and therefore he became the ſon of man, but intimately united to the Creator, God bleſſed for ever. It was one of the firſt and earlieſt confeſſions of faith, That Jeſus Chriſt was the Son of God; and this belief muſt have the ſtrongeſt influence in ſhewing us the evil of ſin, which none elſe was able to expiate.

In many paſſages of Scripture, God's ſending his own Son into the world to ſave ſinners, is repreſented as the ſtrongeſt proof poſſible of his compaſſion and love. The nearneſs of the relation teaches us, as it were, to ſup-

* 1 Pet. i. 18.

poſe ſome reluctance in beſtowing him; in alluſion to which there is a beautiful expreſſion of the apoſtle Paul, "He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up "for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us "all things?"* The very ſame thing ſhews, with equal clearneſs, his abhorrence of ſin. However ſtrongly diſpoſed to ſave ſinners, he would have ſin to be expiated, though his own Son ſhould be the victim: if any thing could have made him diſpenſe with it, this ſhould ſurely have had the effect: and therefore the condemning of ſin ſeems to have been as much in view, as the ſalvation of the ſinner.

Every light in which we can view this ſubject, contributes to ſet before us the evil of ſin. I ſhall only mention further, the greatneſs and ſeverity of the ſufferings of our Redeemer, as they are repreſented both prophetically, to ſhew how much was exacted, and hiſtorically, to ſhew what was paid. As the whole of his life was to be a ſtate of humiliation and ſorrow, it is ſaid, "As many were aſ-"toniſhed at thee, his viſage was ſo marred more than "any man, and his form than the ſons of men." Again, "He is deſpiſed and rejected of men, a man of ſorrows "and acquainted with grief; and we hid, as it were, our "faces from him; he was deſpiſed, and we eſteemed him "not." Once more, "He was wounded for our tranſ-"greſſions, he was bruiſed for our iniquities: the chaſ-"tiſement of our peace was upon him, and with his ſtripes "we are healed."† In the hiſtory of his life in the New Teſtament, we ſee all this verified, in the meanneſs of his birth, and the continued inſults and reproaches thrown upon him during the courſe of his life. There is one remarkable paſſage, John viii. 57. "Thou art not yet "fifty years old, and haſt thou ſeen Abraham?" The meaning of this is hardly obvious, unleſs we ſuppoſe that his natural beauty and bloom was ſo waſted and decayed by ſorrow, that he ſeemed to ſtrangers near twenty years older than he really was.

* Rom. viii. 32. † Iſa. lii. 14. liii. 3, 5.

In the close of the gospel, we have an account of the last scene of his sufferings, in the garden and on the cross. "He was sore amazed, and very heavy.—His soul was "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.—His sweat was "as it were great drops of blood, falling down to the "ground." He was at last stretched on an accursed tree, where the pain of a tortured body was but small to the anguish of an overwhelmed spirit, which constrained him to utter this heavy complaint, "My God, my God, why "hast thou forsaken me?" Let the Christian stand at the foot of the cross, and there see the evil of sin, which required so costly an expiation. Let him there see the holiness and justice of God in its punishment. Let him hear the most High, saying, "Awake, O sword, against "the man who is my fellow." And let him thence learn, how much sin is the object of divine detestation.

Hath a believer then a firm persuasion of all these truths? Are they the frequent theme of his meditations? And must they not necessarily fill him with an abhorrence of sin, inflame him with a hatred of it, and excite in him a self-lothing on its account? Thus it is said in the prophetic writings, "They shall look on me whom they have "pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth "for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as "one that is in bitterness for his first-born."* And must not a repetition of the same views still strengthen the impression, so that, as the apostle Paul tells us of himself, "The world will be crucified unto him, and he unto the "world."†

I am sensible, that these things will have no such effect upon the enemies of the gospel, who disbelieve them, or upon those Christians, if they deserve the name, who disguise, explain away, or give up the satisfaction of Christ; or even those who have a strong tincture of a legal spirit, and are for contributing somewhat toward their acceptance with God, by their own merit, and defective obedience. Such cannot relish these sentiments; and therefore it may

* Zech. xii. 10. † Gal. vi. 14.

ſeem improper, in reaſoning againſt enemies to bring them at all in view. But let it be remembered, that however little many believe ſuch things, they may yet perceive, if they will attend to it, their natural operation upon thoſe who do believe them. And let any modern adept in the ſcience of morals ſhew in his account of the foundation of morality, and the nature of obligation, any thing that hath a force or influence equal to this: or, will the nominal ſelf-righteous Chriſtian, who thinks Chriſt only made up ſome little wants which he finds in himſelf, or that his death had only ſome general expediency in it, ever be equally tender in his practice, with him who ſees ſo much of the purity of the law of God, and his deteſtation of ſin, as to eſteem all his own righteouſneſſes but as filthy rags, and bottoms his hope of acceptance wholly upon the perfect righteouſneſs of his Redeemer?

In the third place, He who expects juſtification only through the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt, has the moſt awful views of the danger of ſin. He not only ſees the obligation and purity of the law, but the ſeverity of its ſanction. It is a fear of wrath from the avenger of blood, that perſuades him to fly to the city of refuge. And if we compare the ſentiments of others with his, either the generality of a careleſs and blinded world, or thoſe who act upon contrary principles, and a different ſyſtem from that which we are now defending, we ſhall find, that not one of them hath ſuch apprehenſions of the wrath and vengeance of God due on the account of ſin, as the convinced ſinner, who flies to the propitiation of Chriſt for deliverance and reſcue.

I am very ſenſible, that many readers will be ready to challenge this argument as preſſed into the ſervice, and wholly improper upon my ſcheme: they will ſuppoſe, that every believer, in conſequence of his faith in Chriſt, is ſcreened from the penalty of the law, and ſheltered from the ſtroke of divine juſtice; he is therefore no more under this fear; and its being no more a motive of action, in the future part of his conduct, is the very ground of the objection I am attempting to remove. This is no doubt

plauſible; but let it be remembered, in what way it is that believers are freed from their apprehenſions of the wrath of God; it is by their acceptance of his mercy through faith in Chriſt. Before the application of this remedy, they ſaw themſelves the children of wrath, and heirs of hell; and they ſtill believe, that every ſin deſerves the wrath of God, both in this life, and that which is to come. Will they therefore re-incur the danger from which they have ſo lately eſcaped, and of which they had ſo terrible a view? will they do ſo voluntarily, even although they know the remedy to be ſtill at hand, ſtill ready to be applied, and certainly effectual? Suppoſe any perſon had been upon the very point of periſhing in a violent and rapid ſtream, and ſaved when his ſtrength was well nigh exhauſted, by the happy intervention of a tender-hearted paſſenger, would he voluntarily plunge himſelf again into the flood, even although he knew his deliverer were ſtanding by, ready for his relief. The ſuppoſition is quite unnatural; and it is equally ſo to imagine, that one ſaved from divine wrath will immediately repeat the provocation, even whilſt he trembles at the thoughts of the miſery of that ſtate from which he had been ſo lately delivered.

Let us only conſider the ſtrong ſenſe which a believer uſually ſhews of the danger of others in an unconverted ſtate, from a perſuaſion of their being under the wrath of God. He warns them, intreats them, pities them, and prays for them. He would not exchange with any one of them, a priſon for a palace, or a ſcaffold for a throne. How then ſhould he be ſuppoſed to follow them in their practice, and thereby to return to their ſtate?

But perhaps, here again it will be urged, that this is improper; becauſe, according to the principles of the aſſertors of imputed righteouſneſs, a believer, being once in a juſtified ſtate, cannot fall from grace; and therefore his ſins do not deſerve wrath; and he himſelf muſt have, from this perſuaſion, a ſtrong confidence that, be what they will, they cannot have ſuch an effect: and accordingly, ſome have expreſsly affirmed, that the future ſins of the elect are forgiven, as well as their paſt, at their converſion; nay, ſome, that they are juſtified from all eternity, that God

doth not ſee ſin in a believer, that his afflictions are not puniſhments, and other things of the like nature. Now, though I muſt confeſs I look upon theſe expreſſions, and many more to be found in certain writers, whatever gloſſes they may put upon them, as unguarded and anti-ſcriptural; yet not to enter into the controverſy at all, I ſuppoſe it will be acknowledged by all without exception, that a believer's ſecurity, and the impoſſibility of his falling from grace, is a ſecurity of not ſinning, that is, of not being under the dominion of ſin, as much as, or rather in order to his ſecurity of deliverance from the wrath of God. His pardon is ſure; but this ſecurity is only hypothetical, becauſe his faith and holineſs are ſecured by the promiſe of God: ſo that, to ſuppoſe a perſon to ſin without reſtraint, by means of this perſuaſion, that his ſalvation is ſecured by his firſt acceptance of Chriſt, is a ſuppoſition ſelf-contradictory. However ſtrongly any man may aſſert that a believer's ſalvation is ſecure, he will not ſcruple, at the ſame time to acknowledge, that if ſuch believer ſhould ſin wilfully and habitually, and continue to do ſo, he would be damned; but he will deny, that any ſuch caſe ever did, or ever can poſſibly happen.*

The objection muſt ſurely appear ſtrongeſt upon the principles of thoſe who make the nature of faith to conſiſt in a belief, that Chriſt died for themſelves in particular, or of their own perſonal intereſt in him, and the pardon and life which he hath purchaſed, making aſſurance eſſential to its daily exerciſe. Yet even theſe will not deny, that their faith is not always equally ſtrong, and that their aſſurance is ſometimes interrupted with doubts and fears. Now, what is the cauſe of theſe doubts, and this uncertainty? Is it not always ſin more directly, or by con-

* Indeed there can be nothing more unfair, than to take one part of a man's belief, and thence argue againſt another part, upon which the firſt is expreſsly founded. If I ſhould ſay, I am confident I ſhall never be drowned in a certain river, becauſe I am reſolved never to croſs it at all; would it not be abſurd to reaſon thus: here is a man who hath a perſuaſion he will never be drowned in this river; therefore he will be ſurely very head-ſtrong and fool-hardy in fording it when it overflows its banks, which is contrary to the very foundation of my ſecurity?

ſequence? So that ſin renders their faith doubtful, which is the very ſame thing with putting them in fear concerning their future ſtate. Indeed it is not more ſure that our Redeemer invites all weary heavy-laden ſinners to come unto him, that they may find reſt, than it is that the unrighteous ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God. So that every inſtance of voluntary ſin, muſt throw back the believer (at leaſt as to his own ſentiments) into his former ſtate, till he be again reſtored by faith and repentance.

From this I think it evidently appears, that the motive of the danger of ſin is not weakened, but hath its full force upon thoſe who expect juſtification by the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt. And, if it is not weakened, it muſt be ſtrengthened by this perſuaſion, ſince, as I have ſhewn above, none have ſo deep a ſenſe of the obligation of the law, and the evil of ſin, and by conſequence none can have ſo great a fear of its awful ſanction. That this is agreeable to Scripture, might be ſhewn at great length, where the putting their right to the favor of God and eternal life more and more beyond all doubt and queſtion, is recommended to believers as an object of their care and diligence. Thus ſays the apoſtle to the Hebrews, "And "we deſire that every one of you do ſhew the ſame dili- "gence, to the full aſſurance of hope unto the end."* And the apoſtle Peter, after a long enumeration of the graces of the Chriſtian life, ſays, "Wherefore the rather, "brethren, give diligence to make your calling and elec- "tion ſure."† Nay, the fear of wrath, and of finally periſhing, is repreſented by the apoſtle Paul himſelf, as one view at leaſt, which habitually influenced his own conduct; "But I keep under my body, and bring it into ſub- "jection, leſt that by any means, when I have preached "to others, I myſelf ſhould be a caſt-away."‡

In the fourth place, Thoſe who expect juſtification by the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt, have the higheſt ſenſe of the purity and holineſs of the divine nature; and therefore muſt be under an habitual conviction of the neceſſity of purity, in order to fit them for his preſence and

* Heb. vi. 11. † 2 Pet. i. 10. ‡ 1 Cor. ix. 27.

enjoyment. If this doctrine in its main design, or by any of its essential parts, had a tendency to represent God, (I will not say as delighting in sin,) but as easy to be pacified towards it, passing it by with little notice, and punishing it but very slightly, there might be some pretence for drawing the conclusion complained of from it. For I think it may be allowed as a maxim, that as is the God, so are his worshippers, if they serve him in earnest. Whatever views they have of the object of their esteem and worship, they will endeavor to form themselves to the same character. But if, on the contrary, this doctrine preserves the purity of God entire; nay, if it gives us still more strong, awful and striking views of it; it can never encourage such as believe it, in the practice of sin.

But that this is the case with all such as believe and understand the doctrine of justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ, may be demonstrated in the clearest manner. It might indeed be shewn, from a great variety of arguments founded upon the mediation of Christ: at present I shall mention but two, the propriety of which, and their relation to the subject in hand, every one must immediately perceive. In the first place, That Christ behoved to suffer by divine appointment for the expiation of sin, is not only equal with, but stronger than all other evidences of the purity of God, and his abhorrence of sin. It is an event of the most striking and astonishing nature, every reflection upon which overwhelms the mind, that the eternal and only-begotten son of God should assume the likeness of sinful flesh, and stand in the room of sinners: even though the merited punishment had been inflicted upon the offenders themselves, it would not have been such a proof of the purity of God. Here, even when he is inclined to mercy, its exercise is obstructed till justice is satisfied. Can any one consider this without being deeply convinced, that he is a God "of purer eyes than to be-"hold iniquity," and with whom unrighteousness can have no communion? Will any, after such views, hope for his favor, while they retain the love of sin, or expect to dwell in his presence, while they continue stained with its pollution?

The ſame thing muſt alſo carry convincing evidence with it, that to ſuppoſe Chriſt to have bought an impunity for ſinners, and procured them a licence to offend, is ſelf-contradictory, and altogether inconſiſtent with the wiſdom and uniformity of the divine government: that he never could hate ſin ſo much before, and love it after the ſufferings of Chriſt: that he could not find it neceſſary to puniſh it ſo ſeverely in the ſurety, and yet afterwards love and bear with it in thoſe for whom that ſurety ſatisfied. Not only may this be clearly eſtabliſhed by reaſon and argument, but it muſt be immediately felt by every one who ſees the neceſſity of the atonement of their Redeemer. They will be ſo far from taking a liberty to ſin, that, on the contrary, they will be ready to cry out, "Who can "ſtand before this holy Lord God?" * Accordingly we ſhall find in experience, that none are more ready to call in queſtion the integrity of their own character; none more ready to fear the effects of the ſins that cleave to them, as unfitting them for the divine preſence, than ſuch as truſt ſolely in the merits of Chriſt for their acceptance with God.

The ſecond thing I propoſed to mention in the doctrine of Chriſt's mediation, which ſhews the purity of the divine nature, is our continued approach to God by him as an interceſſor and advocate. It contributes to keep continually upon our minds a ſenſe of the divine holineſs and purity, and of our own unworthineſs, that we are not permitted to approach him but by the interceſſion of another. Such a conduct in human affairs, properly ſerves to ſhew

* It is a certain fact, that the number of perſons under diſtreſs of mind by perplexing doubts, or anxious fears, concerning their future ſtate, is incomparably greater amongſt the friends than the enemies of this doctrine. By this I do not at all mean that either their doubts are dutiful, or their fears deſirable. Such a ſtate is to be looked upon as the fruit of their own weakneſs and imperfection, and as a chaſtiſement from a wiſe and gracious God, either more immediately for correcting their ſins, or for the trial, illuſtration and perfecting of their grace and virtue; but its being more common among thoſe who believe in Chriſt's imputed righteouſneſs, than others, is a plain proof that this doctrine doth not naturally tend to inſpire any with an unholy boldneſs, or a ſecure and ſlothful preſumption.

dignity and greatneſs on the one part, diſtance and unworthineſs on the other. The ſame conduct then in God towards us, doth it not convince us, that he muſt be ſanctified of all them that draw near to him? And, whilſt it makes imputed righteouſneſs the condition, plainly ſhows the neceſſity of inherent holineſs, as a qualification in our approaches to his throne. Suppoſe an earthly prince were to be addreſſed by two different perſons, one who thought he had a title upon his own merit to make an immediate application, and another who could not approach him without one nearly related to him, and in high favor at court, to procure his admiſſion, and to back his requeſt; which of theſe would probably be moſt reſpectful to his ſovereign, and moſt ſolicitous to avoid giving offence by his conduct? Surely the latter; and ſo it is always with the humble, mortified believer, who "counts all things but "loſs for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Je-"ſus."*

In the fifth place, Thoſe who expect juſtification by the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt, muſt be induced to obedience, in the ſtrongeſt manner, by the liberal and ingenuous motive of gratitude and thankfulneſs to God. That it is the native and genuine expreſſion of gratitude to God, to live a pure and holy life, I ſuppoſe will hardly be denied: at leaſt, this the Scriptures repreſent as pleaſing him, ſerving him, doing his will, honoring him. It is indeed extremely difficult to conceive, how God all-mighty, and all-ſufficient, ſhould be at all affected with our conduct, either good or bad: it ſeems to be improper to ſay, that he can be pleaſed or diſpleaſed with our actions, or that he hath any intereſt at ſtake. Nothing, to be ſure, can be more weak and impotent, than the injuries offered, or the aſſaults made upon him by created beings. As his nature is without variableneſs or ſhadow of turning, ſo his happineſs is ſuch, as can neither be increaſed nor impaired. And yet, in this way, he himſelf hath taught us to conceive of the matter, that holineſs is not only an imitation of his character, but obedience to his will; and its contra-

* Phil. iii. 8.

ry a tranſgreſſion of his law. Theſe have been the ſentiments of all nations without exception; and after the utmoſt efforts we can make to exempt him in our minds from all human paſſions or affections, of joy, anger, or diſpleaſure, we cannot help conſidering it ſtill as proper to ſay, ſuch a courſe of life is agreeable, and ſuch another is diſpleaſing to God, and will provoke his wrath.

Is not gratitude then a principle of action that will be powerful and operative? Mankind in general bear witneſs to this as they have agreed in all ages; to brand ingratitude with the blackeſt mark of infamy, and to reckon it among the moſt atrocious of crimes. And indeed we find by experience, that it is comparatively ſtronger, for the moſt part, than the oppoſite motives of force or fear. There is a ſort of natural tendency in man to reſiſt violence, and refuſe ſubmiſſion to authority, whilſt they may be won by favors, and melted to thankfulneſs and gratitude by kindneſs and love: at leaſt, this may be applied perfectly to the preſent caſe, where the bare outward performance (which may indeed be the effect of fear) will not be accepted without the inclination of the will. A ſlaviſh dread both leſſens the degree, and debaſes the nature of that obedience we might aſſay to perform. This is an univerſal principle; and, in particular, while the law of God ſtands in its force and rigor, as a covenant of works, threatening death without hope of mercy, againſt every tranſgreſſion, it begets a deſpondent ſloth, and, at beſt ſerves only to diſcover our ſin and miſery; nay, as the apoſtle Paul, ſtrongly and juſtly reaſons, it renders our corrupt affections more inflamed and violent by reſtraint; * "Nay, "I had not known ſin, but by the law; for I had not "known luſt, except the law had ſaid, Thou ſhalt not "covet, &c."

But let us now complete this argument, by ſhewing, that a believer in Chriſt is under the ſtrongeſt obligations, from gratitude, to do the will of God. And how many conſiderations concur in ſhewing this? The unſpeakable greatneſs of the bleſſings he receives, no leſs than deliverance

* Rom. vii. 7.

from everlaſting miſery and anguiſh, and a right to everlaſting glory and happineſs.—The infinite and affecting condeſcenſion of the great and glorious Giver, who, in mercy to thoſe who could not profit him at all, but on the contrary, had highly provoked him, laid help for them upon one who is mighty to ſave.—The aſtoniſhing means employed in this deſign, viz. God's "not ſparing even his own Son, "but delivering him up for us all." Well might the apoſtle John ſay, "† God SO loved the world, that he gave "his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him "ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life."—But, above all, the ſenſe which he himſelf hath of his miſery and wretchedneſs. Nothing can be more dreadful than the apprehenſions which a convinced ſinner hath of his own ſtate: what, and how ſtrong then muſt his ſenſe of gratitude be, to him who hath given his Son, and him who was given himſelf, for the purchaſe of his pardon? With what earneſtneſs will he ſeek after, and with what cheerfulneſs will he embrace every opportunity of teſtifying his thankfulneſs? Will not the name of his Redeemer be precious, even "as ointment poured forth?" his laws delightful to him, and his honor dear?

It is proper to obſerve here, that the ſingle view of the bleſſings of divine goodneſs, which muſt have the ſtrongeſt influence in leading us to a grateful reſentment of them, is peculiar to ſuch as expect juſtification through the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt; viz. their being of free unmerited grace and mercy. For, though there are claſſes of Chriſtians who pretend to diſclaim the belief of any merit in man, it would be no difficult matter to ſhew, that there are none who do not, by their profeſſed principles, or their uſual language, ſuppoſe it, excepting thoſe deſcribed in the beginning of this diſcourſe. And ſuch not only believe his mercy to be unmerited, but that they have juſtly deſerved his wrath and indignation, nay, and that they continually do ſo, even in their beſt ſtate; their pureſt and holieſt actions having ſuch ſins attending them, or ſuch a mixture and alloy of unholineſs and impurity in them, as, if

† John iii. 16.

they were weighed in the exact balance of juſtice, would be ſufficient to procure their total rejection.

In how ſtrong a light is this repreſented by the ſacred writers; and how powerful does its operation appear to be upon themſelves? They ſeem penetrated and poſſeſt with a ſenſe of the love of Chriſt, and of God in him, as having ſinners for its object. Thus the apoſtle Paul reaſons; "For ſcarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet, peradventure, for a good man ſome would even dare to die. "But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while "we were yet ſinners, Chriſt died for us."* And again, "If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God "by the death of his Son."†—What a ſenſe of the love of Chriſt is diſcovered by the two following paſſages of the ſame apoſtle! "That Chriſt may dwell in your hearts by "faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may "be able to comprehend with all ſaints, what is the "breadth and length, and depth, and height; and to know "the love of Chriſt, which paſſeth knowledge."‡ The other is, "If any man love not the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, let "him be anathema, Maranatha;"‖ than which nothing could more ſtrongly expreſs his own ſenſe of the obligation. It deſerves notice alſo, that the inſpired writers do often repreſent it as one of the ſtrongeſt arguments againſt ſin, that it is a reproach and diſhonor brought upon our Redeemer and Lord, "For many walk, of whom I have "told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that "they are enemies of the croſs of Chriſt.* Seeing they "crucify to themſelves the Son of God afreſh, and put "him to an open ſhame."†

I muſt again here, as on a former branch of the ſubject, obſerve, That, no doubt, ſuch arguments as theſe, will have little or no effect upon thoſe who have but an imperfect belief of them, which it is to be feared, is the caſe with not a few who go under the name of Chriſtian. But, is it not very evident, that they muſt have the ſtrongeſt imaginable influence upon all ſuch as are actuated by a

* Rom. v. 7, 8. † Rom. v. 10. ‡ Eph. iii. 17, 18, 19.
‖ 1 Cor. xvi. 22. * Phil. iii. 18. † Heb. vi. 6.

lively faith in the doctrine of redemption? They must see themselves indebted to the undeserved mercy and love of God for favors of infinite value, and therefore must certainly endeavor to express their gratitude by an entire consecration of their lives to their benefactor's service.

This leads me to observe in the 6th and last place, That those who expect justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ, must be possessed of a supreme or superlative love to God, which is not only the source and principle, but the very sum and substance, nay, the perfection of holiness. That those who believe in and hope to be accepted and finally saved, through the imputed righteousness of Christ, must be possessed of a supreme love to God, appears from what hath been already said upon the subject of gratitude. Love is the most powerful means of begetting love. Thus says the apostle John, "We have known "and believed the love that God hath unto us; God is "love."* And a little after, "We love him because he "first loved us"†. The infinite and unspeakable mercies which he hath bestowed on us, with all the circumstances attending them, the means and manner of their conveyance, which have been hinted at above, must necessarily excite the most ardent love in return, and every proper expression of it. This is their immediate and natural, nay, this is their necessary and unavoidable effect. "For "the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, "that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he "died for all, that they which live should not henceforth "live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, "and rose again."‡

If any shall think proper to assert, That favors bestowed are not to be considered as the true and formal causes of love, but the excellence and amiable qualities of the object. Thus, for example, supposing any person of a character justly hateful in itself, from caprice, self-interest or any other sinister motive, to bestow many signal favors upon another, the beneficiary might receive, and delight in the favors, without esteeming, nay, even when he could

* 1 John iv. 16. † 1 John iv. 19. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 14.

not esteem the giver. If this is considered as an objection against what I have just now said, and the conclusiveness of the argument to be founded upon it; I offer the two following answers to it. 1st, That in the account given in Scripture of the redemption of the world by the substitution of a Saviour, and the justification of sinners by the imputed righteousness of Christ, there is the brightest display of all the divine perfections. The almighty power, the unsearchable wisdom, the boundless goodness, the inflexible justice, and inviolable truth of God, shine in this great design, with united splendor. Every attribute, that can in reason claim our veneration and esteem, as well as our thankfulness and gratitude, is here to be seen. Even the perfections of justice and mercy (which I will not call jarring attributes, as some too harshly do, but) which seem to restrain and limit each other in their exercise, are jointly illustrated, and shine more brightly by their union, than they could have done separately; and, at the same time, the purity and holiness of the Divine Nature, which is the sum of them all, is deeply impressed upon the mind. So that here is every thing that can produce love; worth and excellence to merit it, love and kindness to excite and raise it. From this it evidently appears, that he who believes in the imputed righteousness of Christ, must have a superlative love of God.

But 2dly, Lest it should be said, that many have not this view of the doctrine in question, as honorable to God, and representing him in an amiable light, but the contrary; I observe, that there must have been a discovery of the glory of God, as shining in this plan of salvation, to all who cordially embrace it. Nothing else could induce them to do so. If its enemies do not see this, and therefore set themselves against it; this confirms the different and honorable sentiments entertained by its friends; so that even supposing (what we will never grant) that this view of the amiableness of the Divine Nature, as represented in the gospel, were not well founded; yet, doubtless it is the view of those "who count all things "but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ,"* and glory in nothing but his cross.

* Phil. iii. 8.

The truth is, notwithſtanding any cavilling objections that may be raiſed againſt it, many favors received by one to whom they are abſolutely neceſſary, and by whom they are infinitely prized, muſt naturally and neceſſarily produce love. This will be reckoned a firſt principle, by every unprejudiced mind; and it is always ſuppoſed in the Holy Scriptures, where the ſaints are repreſented as under the habitual and powerful impreſſion of love to God, for his love to them manifeſted in their redemption. Thus ſays the apoſtle Paul, "For I am perſuaded, that neither "death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor pow- "ers, nor things preſent, nor things to come, nor heighth, "nor depth, nor any other creature, ſhall be able to ſepa- "rate us from the love of God, which is in Chriſt Jeſus "our Lord."

Now, is there any thing more neceſſary to ſhow, that thoſe who believe and truſt in the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt muſt be holy in their lives, than their being under the influence of a ſupreme love to God? Is not this the firſt and great commandment of the law, "Thou ſhalt "love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all "thy ſoul, and with all thy mind?"* Is not this a never-failing ſource of univerſal obedience? as they love God, will they not love their brethren alſo: the very worſt of men, becauſe they are the creatures of God; and the righteous more eſpecially, becauſe they are his ſaints, his choſen ones? Can they love God ſupremely, and yet voluntarily diſpleaſe him, breaking his commandments, or reſiſting his deſigns? We know that love hath a quite different effect, in every other and inferior inſtance, endearing to us every thing related to the perſon who poſſeſſes our eſteem and affection; how then can it be ſuppoſed ſo prepoſterous in this ſingle caſe, when it is fixed on the greateſt and the beſt of objects?

It is a received maxim, That there can be no true love where there is not ſome likeneſs and conformity of nature and diſpoſition to the object beloved, and an endeavor after more. And this is a maxim that will in no caſe

* Matth. xxii. 37.

hold more infalliby, than in moral ſubjects. It is impoſſible that we can love purity, if ourſelves are impure; nay, it is even impoſſible that we can underſtand it. Though an unholy perſon may have a very penetrating genius and capacity, may think acutely, and perhaps reaſon juſtly upon many, or moſt of the natural attributes of God, he can neither perceive nor admire his moral excellence. Inſtead of perceiving the glory of God as infinitely holy, he hates, and ſets himſelf to oppoſe this part of his character, or to ſubſtitute ſomething quite different in its room.* Or, if we can ſuppoſe him able, or from any particular reaſon inclined, to tell the truth, as to what God is, he can never diſcern or feel his glory or beauty in being ſuch. For why, he himſelf is unholy; that is to ſay, in other words, he ſupremely loves, and hath his affections habitually fixed upon ſomething that is not God, ſomething that is contrary to God's nature, and a breach of his law.

Let us continue to reflect a few moments upon this ſubject, which is of great importance, varying a little the light in which it is viewed. Let us conſider what is meant by a ſupreme and ſuperlative love to God. Theſe words muſt have a meaning. It is not a ſupreme love of a certain nature, or perſon, called God, whom no man hath ſeen, and of whom we know no more but the name. In this caſe the old maxim would hold, "Ignoti nulla cupido;" there can be no affection, of either love or hatred, towards an object wholly unknown. A ſupreme love of God therefore, where it really hath place in any heart, muſt

* This is the true reaſon why many ſo warmly oppoſe God's vindictive juſtice, and that in the face of many awful examples of it, even in the preſent partial and imperfect diſpenſation. That there are many marks of God's diſpleaſure againſt ſin, even in that part of his government which is at preſent ſubjected to our view, and alſo diſtinct warnings of a ſtricter reckoning to come, I ſhould think, might be, to an impartial perſon, paſt all doubt; and yet, this is derided and denied by many, merely becauſe they can never think that a perfection in the Divine Nature, for which they have no love or eſteem in their own hearts. All who love God, then, muſt be like him; and even thoſe who will not be what he really is, are always ſtrongly inclined, at leaſt, to ſuppoſe him what they themſelves are.

mean the love of a character in ſome meaſure underſtood, though not fully comprehended. In ſhort, according to the Scriptures, it is a ſupreme love of the ſource and pattern of moral excellence, of a Being of infinite holineſs and purity, with whom "evil cannot dwell." Is not this, in truth and reality, the love of holineſs itſelf, the ſupreme love of it? Can we love holineſs then, and not aſpire after it? can we love it and not endeavor to practiſe it? nay, can we love it, and not poſſeſs it? can we love holineſs ſupremely, and live in ſin habitually? it is the groſſeſt contradiction, the moſt abſolute impoſſibility. There is then a diametrical oppoſition between the love of God, and the ſervice of ſin. To ſuppoſe them conſiſtent, would be ſuppoſing, that the tendency of the heart and affections might be oppoſite to the courſe of the life, or ſupremely fixed upon two things mutually deſtructive to each other; on the contrary, our Saviour juſtly affirms, that "no man "can ſerve two maſters; for either he will hate the one, "and love the other; or elſe he will hold to the one, and "deſpiſe the other. Ye cannot ſerve God and mammon."*

Once more, Is not the love of God, I mean, the ſupreme love of God, preciſely what is meant by holineſs? It is not only an evidence of it, not only a ſource of it, not only an important branch, but the ſum and perfection of it. For what is ſin in the heart, of which all evil actions are but the fruits and expreſſions, and from which they derive their malignity and contrariety to the divine will? Is it not the love and purſuit of inferior objects on their own account, and giving them that place in our affections which is due only to God? All ſins, of whatever kind, may be eaſily reduced to this, and ſhown to be nothing elſe, but the alienation and eſtrangement of our heart and affections from God, to whom alone they are due; which ſo far as it prevails, neceſſarily occaſions a miſapplication of every faculty of our minds, and of every member of our bodies, and thus a rebellion of the whole man. But whoever loves God above all, and places his chief happineſs and delight in him, is truly holy; not only will be

* Matth. vi. 24.

ſo as the effect, but really is ſo, by the poſſeſſion of this diſpoſition. In proportion as this love is increaſed and ſtrengthened, his ſanctification is carried on; and when it is compleat and triumphant, entirely free from the mixture of any baſer paſſion, he is perfect in holineſs.

It may probably occur to ſome readers, that this reaſoning will not accord with the accounts given by many moderns of the nature and foundation of virtue. Some found it upon the preſent prevailing tendency of our own diſpoſitions, and make it point directly and immediately at our own happineſs; others found it upon our connections with our fellow-creatures in this ſtate, and make it conſiſt in benevolence of heart, and beneficence of action; others again, who approach nearer the truth, but without preciſion, ſtile it an acting towards every object, according to reaſon and the nature of things. Upon any of theſe ſchemes, the connection, or rather coincidence, above-alledged, between the love of God, and virtue, or moral excellence, does not ſo clearly appear. This indeed ſeems to me the great defect of theſe accounts of the nature and foundation of virtue, that they keep our relation and obligations to God at a diſtance at leaſt, and much out of view. But as this is the firſt commandment of the law which God hath revealed to man for his obedience, "Thou ſhalt love the Lord with all thy heart, with all thy "ſtrength, and with all thy mind." So, upon a fair and juſt examination, the ſupreme love of God will be found the moſt conſiſtent and rational account of the nature of virtue, and the true ſource from which all other virtues, that are not ſpurious, muſt take their riſe, and from which they derive their force and obligation: it is founded not only upon the relation of creatures to their Creator, but on the inherent excellence of the Divine Nature. For ſuppoſing (what will ſcarcely be denied) that God may be at all the object of our eſteem and love, it is plain, that we ought to have the higheſt eſteem for the higheſt excellence, a ſupreme love for what is infinitely amiable; and if our affections do in any meaſure prefer what is leſs to what is more worthy, they muſt be, in that proportion, wrong and miſplaced.

As to ſome of the phraſes (for they are no more) which come into repute together, or in ſucceſſion one after another, to expreſs the riſe and foundation of virtue, ſuch as a ſenſe of beauty, of harmony, of order and proportion: this is no explication of the matter at all; it is only tranſferring the language uſed with reſpect to ſenſible objects, to ethics or morality, in which it muſt be underſtood figuratively. That there is ſome analogy between thoſe ſubjects and morality, may be eaſily confeſſed; but there are few different ſubjects in nature, between which as ſtrong, or a ſtronger analogy may not be traced. For example, how eaſy would it be to reduce all notions of morality, nay, indeed all notions of beauty in painting, or harmony in muſic, to truth and reality, in oppoſition to falſhood? Wollaſton's Religion of Nature Delineated is an example of this, in which he reſolves the morality, or immorality, of every action, into the truth or falſhood of a propoſition. And, whoever reads the book will, I dare ſay, be ſenſible, that it is juſt as natural and proper, as a certain noble author's rhapſodies upon beauty and harmony. In ſhort, it were eaſy to ſhew, that none of the accounts given of the nature of virtue, have any meaning, truth or force in them, but ſo far as they are founded upon, or coincident with, that which I have above given from the word of God.*

* There is one late writer, David Hume, Eſq. who, it muſt be confeſſed, hath excelled all that went before him in an extraordinary account of the nature of virtue. I have taken no notice above of his principles, if they may be called ſo, becauſe I think both him and them worthy of the higheſt contempt; and would have diſdained to have made mention of his name, but that it affords me an opportunity of expreſſing my ſenſe of the wrong meaſures taken by many worthy and able men, who, in ſermons and other diſcourſes, give grave and ſerious anſwers to his writings. As to himſelf, that man muſt be beyond the reach of conviction by reaſoning, who is capable of ſuch an inſult upon reaſon itſelf, and human nature, as to rank all natural advantages, mental and corporeal, among the virtues, and their contraries among the vices. Thus he hath expreſsly named wit, genius, health, cleanlineſs, taper legs, and broad ſhoulders among his virtues; diſeaſes he alſo makes vices; and conſiſtently enough, indeed, takes notice of the infectious nature of ſome diſeaſes, which, I ſuppoſe, he reckons an aggravation of the crime. And, as to mankind in general, if they were at that paſs as to need a refutation of ſuch nonſenſe, as well as impiety, it

Thus I have ſhown, that thoſe who believe the doctrine of imputed righteouſneſs muſt be moſt holy in their lives; that the obligations to obedience are not weakened, but ſtrengthened and confirmed by it. This any impartial perſon may be convinced of, who will reflect, that it is hardly poſſible to conceive an obligation to duty, of any kind, which may not be reduced to one or other of thoſe above-named: and, if I am not miſtaken, none of them can operate ſo ſtrongly upon any other ſcheme, as that which is here eſpouſed, and which is ſo evidently founded on the Scriptures of truth.

There is, however, one general conſideration, which it would be wrong to omit, in ſhewing the friendly influence of this doctrine upon holineſs of life, although it doth not ſo properly fall under the notion of a direct obligation; that is, the great encouragement given in it to the ſtudy of purity and holineſs by the proſpect of ſucceſs. Deſpair of ſucceſs cuts the ſinews of diligence in every enterprize. And particularly upon the ſubject of religion, nothing more effectually enervates our reſolutions, and leads to a ſullen, deſpondent neglect of duty, than an opinion that we ſhall not ſucceed in attempting it, or ſhall not be accepted in our endeavors after it, or our imperfect attainments in it. But the doctrine of juſtification by the free grace of God,

would be in vain to reaſon with them at all. If I were to contrive an anſwer to this writer, it would be a viſible, inſtead of a legible anſwer: it would be to employ a painter to make a portrait of him from the life; to encompaſs him with a few hieroglyphics, which it would not be difficult to deviſe; to inſcribe upon his breaſt theſe words, HEALTH, CLEANLINESS, and BROAD SHOULDERS; and put the following ſentence in his mouth, which he hath adopted from a French author, "FEMALE INFIDELITY when it is known is a "ſmall matter, and when it is not known, is nothing." This would be very proper when applied to his writings, who, as well as his friend and coadjutor without a name, makes "our moſt important reaſonings up-"on many ſubjects to reſt ultimately upon ſenſe and feeling." It is probable ſome over delicate perſons will think this is not treating him with ſufficient decency; but till there be a plan agreed upon, of the meaſures of decency due from infidels to Chriſtians, and from Chriſtians to infidels, whether he does not deſerve far worſe treatment from any who believes the goſpel, I leave to the judgment of thoſe who will read his writings.

" through the redemption that is in Chriſt Jeſus," gives the greateſt encouragement to all who will return to their duty. This encouragement naturally divides itſelf into two branches; 1ſt, The ſure hope of acceptance through Chriſt. 2dly, The powerful and effectual aid provided for them in the Holy Spirit, which he hath purchaſed, and beſtows for their ſanctification.

1ſt, The ſure hope of acceptance through Chriſt Jeſus. Although ſin hath greatly blinded the minds of men, there is ſtill ſo much of " the work of the law written in their hearts," as muſt make them ſenſible that in many things they offend, and muſt give them ground of ſolicitude and fear, while they expect to be juſtified by their own merits. Accordingly we find, that except the groſſeſt and boldeſt infidels, of which ſort this age has furniſhed ſome examples,* all claſſes of men confeſs themſelves guilty of many ſins, faults, or failings; ſome expreſſing themſelves in a ſtronger, and ſome in a ſofter ſtile, according to the greater or leſſer degree of the depravation of natural conſcience. If there is any meaning then in theſe words, they muſt be liable to the diſpleaſure of God in ſome reſpects, for which they cannot themſelves atone; and muſt therefore labor under, at leaſt, much uncertainty as to their acceptance. This muſt weaken their hands, and ſlacken their diligence, in an attempt ſo precarious in its iſſue.

Perhaps ſome may ſay, that this is only levelled againſt thoſe who deny all ſatisfaction, or all uſe of the merit of Chriſt, but not againſt thoſe who expect to be juſtified by their own merit ſo far as it goes, and truſt in their Saviour for making up what is wanting in themſelves. But of ſuch I would aſk, how they ſhall be ſatisfied, that they have gone as far with their own merit as is requiſite, if there is any ſtreſs to be laid upon it at all? Will they ſay, as ſome fooliſhly do, that they do all in their power, and truſt in Chriſt for ſupplying what may be ſtill deficient?

* Vide Eſſays on the principles of morality and natural religion. Theſe eſſays conclude with an addreſs to the Supreme Being which contains the following words; " What mortals term ſin, thou pro-
" nounceſt to be only error; for mortal evil vaniſhes, in ſome meaſure,
" from before thy more perfect ſight."

If they dare resolutely stand to this plea at the last day, when God shall judge the secrets of all hearts, that they have done all in their power, there is really nothing wanting to them; they need no Saviour, they need no pardon. But this is what no mere man that ever lived can say with truth. So that upon any scheme, but an entire reliance on the merits of Christ for justification before God, there must still be a dreadful uncertainty, inconsistent with that liberal and ingenuous freedom with which the children of God love and serve him. These, strongly penetrated with a sense of duty and obligation, deeply humbled under a sense of sin, and resting on the perfect atonement made by their Saviour and substitute, serve him with alacrity and pleasure, wearing the bonds of love. And, knowing the weakness of their best services while here, they long for that blessed time when they shall be made perfectly holy, and yet shall forever acknowledge themselves indebted, for their place in heaven, and their continuance there, to the grace of God, and the love of their Redeemer.

The other branch of the encouragement which believers in Christ have to diligence in duty, is the promise of the Holy Spirit to lead them into all truth, and guide them to all duty. This promise is expressly made to believers, and their seed after them, in every age of the church, to the end of the world. Thus says the apostle Peter, "And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; for the "promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that "are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall "call."* And it is to this plentiful effusion of the Spirit, that the prophets ascribe the purity and prosperity of the church in the latter days. "For I will pour water upon "him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I "will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon "thine offspring, and they shall spring up as among the "grass, as willows by the water-courses."†

I am sensible, that the nature and form of the argument doth not permit me at once to suppose the truth of this, and to make use of the direct agency and effectual opera-

* Acts ii. 38, 39. † Is. xliv. 3, 4.

tion of the Spirit of God to prove the holineſs of ſaints. But it may be eaſily made appear, that the belief and perſuaſion of this muſt have the ſtrongeſt influence in animating their own endeavors. What more proper for ſuch a purpoſe than the belief of an almighty aid, certainly to be exerted in their behalf? Muſt not this invigorate their powers, and preſerve them from ſinking through fear of the number and ſtrength of their adverſaries? Nothing but ignorance of themſelves can make them boaſt of their own ſtrength. The reſult of experience in the ſtudy of holineſs, muſt be a humbling conviction of the force of temptation, and ſtrength of paſſion on the one hand, and the weakneſs and feebleneſs of human reaſon and reſolution on the other. Muſt it not then be of the greateſt advantage to believers, to be under an habitual perſuaſion of the preſence and operation of the Spirit of God to ſanctify them wholly? Without this the attempt would be altogether vain; but this makes the exhortation come with peculiar force and energy, "Work out your own ſalvation "with fear and trembling: for it is God that worketh in "you both to will and to do of his good pleaſure."*

It will be a ſupport to the preſent argument to obſerve, that ſome ſenſe of the weakneſs of human nature, and its inequality to any thing arduous and difficult, ſeems to have been pretty univerſal in every country and in every age of the world. Thus among the ancient Heathens, of whom we have the fulleſt account, all great enterprizes were ſuppoſed to be undertaken at the inſtigation, and executed by the aſſiſtance of ſome ſuperior power. Their poets always gave out, that themſelves were inſpired, and their hero directed by ſome deity; and moderns generally ſuppoſe, that the very imagination of this had no ſmall influence on the ſucceſs of the attempt. The interpoſition of deities was, indeed, ſo remarkable in the moſt eminent ancient poets, that it has been reckoned a branch of their art, diſtinguiſhed by a particular name, called the machinery, and is now inſeparably joined, at leaſt, to one ſpecies of poetry. Nay, it was a pretty general belief among

* Phil. ii. 12, 13.

ſome nations, that every particular perſon had an angel, ſpirit, or genius, to whoſe care he was committed, who aſſiſted him in difficulty, and protected him in danger. Does not all this then evidently prove, that a perſuaſion of ſuperior aid muſt have the moſt happy influence on our activity and diligence in duty, and our progreſs in holineſs? Doth it not make it reaſonable to expect, that thoſe who truſt to nothing better than their own ſtrength, will be proportionably low in their attempts, and deficient in their ſucceſs; but that thoſe whoſe eyes are fixed for direction upon God, and who live in a continual dependence on his grace, will become truly partakers of a divine nature?

Now, is not this the diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic of the ſcheme of redemption by free grace, that it gives leſs to man, and more to God, than any other plan? It ſeems indeed particularly to point at this very deſign in every part of it, to abaſe the pride of man, and to exalt the grace of God. Self-denial is the firſt condition of the goſpel, and a renunciation of all ſelf-dependence is the leſſon continued through the whole. "Surely in the Lord have I "righteouſneſs and ſtrength," may be called the motto of every Chriſtian, is a ſhort and comprehenſive ſummary of his faith, and the great foundation of his hope and truſt. As then it has been ſhewn, that he is habitually inclined to obedience, with what alacrity and vigor will he apply himſelf to his duty, ſince he believes that Almighty power is conſtantly engaged in his behalf; and that however unable he may be of himſelf, for any thing that is good, yet a thorough and effectual change will be wrought in him by divine power? What a firmneſs and fortitude muſt be inſpired by the following paſſage of the prophet Iſaiah, and other promiſes in the ſame ſtrain? "Haſt thou not "known, haſt thou not heard, that the everlaſting God, "the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, nei- "ther is weary? there is no ſearching of his underſtanding. "He giveth power to the faint: and to them that have no "might he increaſeth ſtrength. Even the youths ſhall "faint and be weary, and the young men ſhall utterly fall:

" But they that wait on the Lord ſhall renew their ſtrength; " they ſhall mount up with wings as eagles; they ſhall " run and not be weary, they ſhall walk and not faint."*

But now, perhaps, after all the advantages of this doctrine pointed out in the preceding diſcourſe, ſome will be ready to aſk me, if it cannot poſſibly be applied to the encouragement of impiety, or ſerve to foſter a ſupine ſloth and negligence? To this I am ready to anſwer, By ſome who profeſs it, it may; but by thoſe who really believe it, it never can. There is no part of the word, or providence of God, that may not be, or that hath not frequently in fact been, abuſed to bad purpoſes, by wicked men under the dominion of their luſts. But, in order to remove ambiguity, it is proper to obſerve, that wherever there is a national profeſſion of any religious principles, there muſt be many who are not believers, in any other ſenſe than that they have been accuſtomed to hear ſuch and ſuch things aſſerted, have never enquired into nor doubted, ſeldom even thought of them, and ſo do not diſbelieve them. But there is a great difference between ſuch a traditionary belief as may produce a cuſtomary profeſſion, and ſuch a real and inward perſuaſion as will change the heart, and influence the practice. That there may be ſome of the firſt ſort of believers in the doctrine of imputed righteouſneſs, who are not holy, or perhaps abuſe it, ill underſtood, to unholineſs, I am willing to allow; but that all thoſe who believe it upon real and perſonal conviction, muſt be moſt coſcientious in the practice of every moral duty, I hope hath been clearly made appear in the preceding pages.

The above is all that was firſt intended, in the proſecution of this argument: but, perhaps, it will not be improper before diſmiſſing the ſubject, to make a few reflections upon the reception which it hath met with, and muſt ſtill expect to meet with in the world; upon its importance and proper application.

It is very certain, being neither denied by friends nor enemies, that this doctrine hath, in all ages, not only been attacked with the weapons of human wiſdom, but gene-

* If. xl. 28—37.

rally alſo loaded with much reproach and contempt. After therefore it hath been ſo far defended, as may ſatisfy every impartial mind, and its influence upon practice demonſtrated, I obſerve, that whatever impreſſion this fact may make upon others, it ſeems to me no ſmall confirmation of its truth, as coming from God, that it is contrary to the ſpirit of the world. This is both agreeable to ſcripture and to ſound reaſon. The doctrine of "Chriſt crucified," the apoſtle Paul tells us, "was to the Jews a "ſtumbling block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs." * And, ſpeaking of the effect of the publication of this doctrine, he ſays, "Ye ſee your calling brethren, how that not many "wiſe men after the fleſh, not many mighty, not many "noble are called. But God hath choſen the fooliſh things "of the world to confound the wiſe; and God hath choſen "the weak things of the world to confound the things "which are mighty; and baſe things of the world, and "things which are deſpiſed, hath God choſen, yea, and things "which are not, to bring to nought things that are." † This we are not to underſtand, as if the apoſtle yielded, that the goſpel was not agreeable to true wiſdom, or that the proper and legitimate uſe of human wiſdom would not lead us to embrace it: but it contains a ſtrong intimation of a truth not commonly attended to, that great natural abilities have pretty much the ſame influence on the moral character with great wealth or temporal proſperity. They are both apt to intoxicate the mind, and lead to pride, arrogance, and ſelf-conceit: and perhaps intellectual pride is as great an obſtruction to the diſcovery of truth, as any bad diſpoſition whatſoever. We are alſo taught, that God ordered and diſpoſed of things in this manner, for the wiſe ends of his providence, for the ſubjection of the arrogance and boaſted wiſdom of men; or in the words of the apoſtle, "That no fleſh ſhould glory in his preſence." The reception then which this doctrine uſually meets with, ſhould be ſo far from remaining as a prejudice or objection againſt its truth or utility, that, on the contrary, it ſhould contribute to ſatisfy us, that it is the real and genuine doctrine

* 1 Cor. i. 23. † 1 Cor. i. 26—28.

of Chriſt, ſince it meets with the ſame ſort of oppoſition, and from the ſame quarter, with which this was encountered at its firſt publication.

And indeed, beſides this exact correſpondence between the event, and what the Scripture gives us reaſon to expect, as to the reception of the goſpel in the world, I apprehend it ought to be a general prejudice in favor of its truth, conſidering the original it claims, that it doth not carry on it any of the marks of human wiſdom. It ſeems to lie (If I may ſo ſpeak) quite out of the way of human imagination and contrivance, and is diametrically oppoſite in its whole tendency, to the moſt prevailing human inclination, viz. ſelf-eſteem, pride, and vain-glory. This indeed is the true reaſon why this doctrine is ſo unacceptable to the world, eſpecially the ambitious part of it, that it is directly levelled againſt their corrupt affections. It gives a view of the holineſs, purity and juſtice of God, which is intolerable to all thoſe who are not willing to break their league with ſin and vanity. And when it is truly complied with, it not only divorces men from their former attachment to ſin and ſenſuality, but will not ſuffer them to glory, even in their new character. All who ſubmit unfeignedly to the goſpel, both feel and confeſs themſelves wholly indebted for forgiveneſs and acceptance, for their preſent holineſs and their future happineſs, to the free, unmerited grace of God. How hard ſuch a ſacrifice is, none can conceive who have not ſome acquaintance with vital, experimental religion. Now, what is the moſt natural inference from this? Is it not, that we have not the ſmalleſt reaſon to ſuſpect this doctrine to be a "cunningly deviſed fable," but may reſt aſſured, that it is "the wiſdom and the "power of God for ſalvation, to every one that believ-'eth."*

This leads me to obſerve, That if the reaſoning which the reader hath peruſed upon this ſubject be juſt and concluſive, there is one circumſtance in which this "doctrine "according to godlineſs" eſſentially differs from all other ſchemes or ſyſtems of morality. It is, that any of theſe

* Rom. i. 16.

ſyſtems a man may underſtand, embrace and defend, without having his heart made better, or his morals ſecured or improved by it at all; whereas it is impoſſible, that any man can really, and from the heart, embrace the doctrine of Chriſt's imputed righteouſneſs, without being ſanctified by it, "dead to ſin, and alive to God." That the firſt of theſe aſſertions is true, the lives and characters of ſome noted writers on the foundation of morality, have been, and are an undeniable proof: ſome of them do indeed expreſsly yield it; and it is evidently yielded, by implication, in all the late writings, where there is ſo frequent mention of the ſmall influence that ſpeculation has upon practice. On this is founded what a late acute and eminent writer* juſtly calls the maſter prejudice of this age, viz. "The innocence of error." This may as well be expreſſed by its counterpart, the unprofitableneſs or inefficacy of truth, which ſurely ought to be but a weak recommendation of what is called truth by thoſe who hold ſuch an opinion.

That the other aſſertion is juſt, hath been the point undertaken to be made out in this eſſay: and whoever will but conſider how unacceptable this doctrine is to mankind in general, may be ſatisfied that there can be no effectual inducement to embrace it, till there be ſuch a diſcovery and ſenſe of the evil and danger of ſin, as is utterly inconſiſtent with a voluntary continuance in it. The apparent ſtate of the viſible church, in which vice and wickedneſs ſo ſhamefully abound, will be no objection to this, if what I hinted above be recollected,† that there is a great difference between a nominal or cuſtomary profeſſion, and real belief. As to the few more zealous and eminent aſſertors of this doctrine, who ſometimes greatly diſhonor their profeſſion, the anſwer is eaſy. They are hypocrites by whom indeed great "offences do come;" and the weak and unſtable fall over the ſtumbling block, and are tempted to doubt the reality of religion, by this diſcovery of the falſhood of its profeſſors. But ſuch can never be fairly ranked among believers, whoſe garb and habit they

* Mr. Warburton. † See page 73.

only treacherouſly wore, for ſome time, while they were in the intereſt of another maſter.* We may ſay of them as the apoſtle John ſays, "They went out from us, but "they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they "would no doubt have continued with us, but they went "out that they might be made manifeſt that they were "not all of us."†

But this is not all; for the reception of the doctrine of imputed righteouſneſs is not merely to be conſidered as the beſt means, comparatively, of producing, preſerving and increaſing our ſanctification and purity, as ſure and effectual, while others are precarious, but it is the only way, and all others are abſolutely inſufficient for the pur-

* Perhaps ſome may think the late accounts publiſhed of the Moravians an objection to the juſtneſs of this repreſentation. They are ſaid to be great aſſertors of the doctrine of imputed righteouſneſs; and yet there have not only appeared ſome bad men amongſt them, but they are univerſally charged as a ſect with moſt impious and ſcandalous practices. Perhaps candor and charity might have led us to ſuppoſe, that moſt, or all thoſe accuſations, were calumnious, if they had been affirmed by none but avowed enemies to the doctrines which they eſpouſe; as the firſt Chriſtians were charged by their enemies with eating human ſacrifices, when they met in private to celebrate the Lord's ſupper. But the caſe it ſeems is otherwiſe here; for ſome unſuſpected accuſers have appeared, whom none can imagine prejudiced againſt them for embracing the doctrine of imputed righteouſneſs. I confeſs myſelf to have ſo little acquaintance with thoſe Hernhutters, as they are called, either as to their principles or practices, that I cannot very fully handle the ſubject; but, if there is no other objection to what is affirmed above, no doubt, an acquaintance with the true ſtate of the caſe would enable us eaſily to remove this. Perhaps, after all, the bad practices charged againſt them, may be only the conſequence of ſome deſigning perſons getting in among them, and a great plurality may be innocent, or, at leaſt, comparatively ſo. But however this be, it is not certain (at leaſt to me) that they really embrace the ſame doctrine with us: they do indeed talk much of the Lamb, ſpeak of hiding themſelves in his wounds, &c. but I think their language is peculiar to themſelves, and by no means the phraſeology either of Scripture, or of any other ſect of Chriſtians. Beſides, as Count Zinzendorf, their leader, takes upon him to be a prophet, it is probable, they are juſt a ſet of deluded people, drawn away by his art, who may much more properly be ſaid to believe in him, than in Chriſt.

† 1 John ii. 19.

poſe. If this be indeed the doctrine of Chriſt, the ſcripture-method of ſalvation, then it is not only true, but a fundamental truth. Of this we are frequently and ſolemnly aſſured in the word of God. "I am the way, "(ſays our Saviour) and the truth and the life; no man "cometh unto the Father but by me."* So ſay the apoſtles Peter and John, "Neither is there ſalvation in any "other: for there is none other name under heaven, given "among men, whereby we muſt be ſaved."† It is therefore in vain for any to expect an effectual change of life, but by an acquaintance with Chriſt, and him crucified. We have indeed the cleareſt evidence from experience, that no human reaſon, no argument whatever, drawn from worldly conveniency, is at all ſufficient to contend with violent and ſinful habits. We ſee many examples of perſons of excellent underſtanding and knowledge in other matters, nay, who can reaſon ſtrongly and juſtly upon the bad conſequences of vice in others, ſometimes even in themſelves, who will yet go on to ruin their name, family, fortune and health, while they are ſlaves to evil habits: nothing will change them but the grace of God.

And as we have ſeen above, that our own righteouſneſs in its beſt ſtate is wholly ineffectual for our acceptance with God, ſo all who have any expectations of this kind from it plainly ſhow, that they have ſuch defective views of the extent and obligation of the divine law, as are inconſiſtent with an unfeigned univerſal ſubmiſſion to it. This is a matter of the laſt importance, and ought to be particularly recommended to the ſerious conſideration of ſuch as may have, at ſometimes, ſome imperfect convictions; ſuch as from a wearineſs and ſatiety of ſinning may give a temporary preference to a life of religion, and raiſe a feeble and ineffectual wiſh with Balaam, that they might "die the death of the righteous." They ought to be told that no endeavors to be a little better than before, no abſtinence from ſome ſins as a kind of atonement for others retained, no reſolutions taken in their own ſtrength, no righteouſneſs of their own offered or truſted in as a matter

* John xiv. 6. † Acts iv. 12.

of their juſtification, will be accepted, or is worthy of being ſo; that nothing will be truly effectual, till they ſee their loſt condition, and believe in Chriſt, firſt for pardon, and then for ſanctification, "to the praiſe of the glory of "his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the be-"loved."* If they have any other plea, any other ground of hope and truſt, it ſhall undoubtedly fail them; they muſt remain under a ſentence of juſt and legal condemnation, and ſhall finally periſh; for "he that believeth in "the Son hath everlaſting life; but he that believeth not "the Son ſhall not ſee life, but the wrath of God abideth "on him, John iii. 36."†

* Eph. i. 6.

† The application of theſe paſſages of Scripture, to the particular principles above maintained, will, perhaps, be thought to include in it a very ſevere and uncharitable condemnation of many Chriſtians, who differ in judgment upon the point of juſtification. And indeed I pretend no great friendſhip to the ſentiments ſo frequently expreſſed of late, "That it is a ſmall matter what a man believes, if his life be "good." The aſſertion might perhaps be allowed, if it did not contain a fooliſh and unreaſonable ſuppoſition, that a man may believe wrong, and yet lead as good a life as he that believes right; the contrary to which will always be expected by him who gives credit to the word of God, that his people are "ſanctified through the truth." As to Socinians and Pelagians, who are the greateſt oppoſers of the truths above defended, I never did eſteem them to be Chriſtians at all; ſo the conſequence, with regard to them, may be eaſily admitted. But it will be thought hard to ſay the ſame thing of the Arminians. However, if the righteouſneſs of Chriſt is the only ground of our juſtification, and the reception of him in this character the true principle of ſanctification, I do not ſee how we can avoid concluding the danger of thoſe who act upon any other plan. And yet I am perſuaded there have been, and are many good men among them: which may be accounted for in this manner, that their hearts are better than their underſtandings; and they are habitually under the government of principles, which, through ſome miſtaken views, and groundleſs fears of their abuſe, they ſpeak of more ſparingly, or rather ſeem to eſtabliſh the contrary poſitions. The proof of this aſſertion I take from their own writings, particularly from the difference between their ſermons and other diſcourſes, and thoſe forms of prayer which they have drawn up, and not only recommended to others, but left behind them as a witneſs of their own exerciſe in their cloſets. If they be ſuppoſed to feel the ſentiments which they expreſs in their prayers, it can eaſily be made appear that theſe ſentiments can only

I am naturally led to conclude this subject, by observing, that the importance, efficacy and necessity of the imputed righteousness of Christ, shews how much it is the duty of all ministers of the gospel, to make it the main and leading theme of their sermons. The preaching of the gospel is by the apostle Paul, in a very just and expressive manner, stiled preaching "the unsearchable riches of "Christ." In him every prophecy, precept, promise and truth is centred. His character and work as a Saviour is held forth in a variety of lights in the sacred oracles, and in every opening or view that is given us, so to speak, of the dispensations of Divine Providence and grace, he is the chief figure, or the termination of the prospect. If therefore we would know what esteem is due to our Redeemer in our hearts, and how high a place he ought to hold in our views of religion, let us observe the regard paid to him by the sacred writers. They derive almost all their motives to every moral duty, from what he hath done, and is still doing for us, and seem to delight even in the repetition of his name. I am persuaded those who are accustomed to the devout and serious perusal of the word of God will not reckon it "enthusiasm," when I say that these writers appear to be warmed and elevated above their ordinary measure, when they celebrate his salvation; and that both in the Old and New Testament, wherever we meet with any passage singularly lofty and sublime, there we may be sure that Christ the Redeemer is the immediate theme.

Justification by the free grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, was the doctrine taught among Christians, in the earliest and purest ages of the church. And their departure from it was the prelude to that universal corruption of faith and worship, that relaxation of discipline, and dissolution of manners, which took place in the ages following. It is also very remarkable,

be dictated by the doctrine of free grace. If what they say of themselves be true in its natural and obvious meaning, and if they believe it, which charity obliges us to suppose, it must be altogether vain to lay the least stress upon their own righteousness for their acceptance with God.

that this doctrine was always fully and distinctly taught in those churches which never submitted to the tyranny, or received the corruptions of the Romish Antichrist; I mean the churches of the Piedmontese vallies, which by so many judicious writers, are supposed to be the two witnesses mentioned in the Revelation, who fled into the wilderness from the persecution of the beast, and prophesied in sackcloth.

The accounts which have been transmitted to us of the principles held by them, long before the reformation, plainly show, that they maintained this doctrine from the beginning. And as it is well known that the reformation took its first rise from the gross and scandalous application of the doctrine of merit in indulgences, so all the reformers, without exception, were strenuous asserters of free grace. This was reckoned by them "articulus stantis aut "cadentis ecclesiæ," by which the church must stand or fall. Particularly, our reformers in both parts of this island agreed in preaching the same doctrine, and the eminent piety of our fathers is a standing evidence of its force and efficacy.

It doth not perhaps become, and probably it would not be safe for me to enter into a particular examination of the manner of preaching in the present age; and therefore my reflections upon that subject shall be very few and general. What is most obvious in our present situation, and what ought to affect Christians with most concern, is, the great prevalence of infidelity. This is the more surprising, that we have never wanted, and do not at present want, many able and eminent writers to stand up in defence of the gospel, and refute the changeable and inconsistent reasonings of infidels, whatever form they shall from time to time, think fit to assume, and on whatever principles they shall pretend to build. But, I am afraid, the best defence of all is but too much neglected, viz. Zealous assiduous preaching the great and fundamental truths of the gospel, the lost condemned state of man by nature, and the necessity of pardon through the righteousness, and renovation by the Spirit of Christ. This would make a far greater number of those who call themselves by the name of Christ, Christians indeed. And the visible efficacy of

his doctrine, would be a ſenſible demonſtration of its truth and divine original. If theſe truths are not contradicted, it may be ſafely ſaid, that they are by many kept more out of view than formerly. And ſurely we have no great cauſe to boaſt of our improvements in the preaching art, if its goodneſs is to be determined, like that of a tree, not by its bloſſoms, but its fruits.

There is one obſervation which may ſatisfy us, that the preaching of the croſs of Chriſt will moſt effectually promote real reformation. It is, that thoſe preachers who (to ſay no more) approach neareſt to making our own merit and obedience the ground of our acceptance with God, very ſeldom, if ever, give any alarm to the conſciences of their hearers. Let them recommend ever ſo pure and high a ſtandard of morals, they are heard without fear, and, if they preach elegantly, with pleaſure, even by the moſt profligate. To ſuch preachers, all vain worldly-minded people, uſually attach themſelves, where they have not caſt off the very form of religion; but moſt part of ſerious Chriſtians, together with profeſſing hypocrites, who cannot eaſily be diſtinguiſhed in this world, always follow preachers of another ſtrain. It is eaſy to ſee the reaſon of this from what hath been ſaid above; there are none who ſet the ſtrictneſs and obligation of the law, the holineſs and juſtice of God, in ſo awful a light, as thoſe who believe there is no ſhelter from the ſanction of the law, and the wrath of an offended God, but in the blood of Chriſt. Perhaps, I am already enſnared and expoſed to cenſure, by affirming, that there are among us preachers of different ſtrains. But it is ſo certain a truth, that I cannot deny it; and ſo important, that I will not diſguiſe it.

Upon the whole, as the preſent aſpect of public affairs, as the ſtate of the world, and character of the age, loudly call upon all of every ſtation to exert themſelves with diligence for the ſupport and revival of truth and righteouſneſs: I hope the miniſters of the goſpel will promote this end, by zealouſly laboring to bring men to the ſaving knowledge of Chriſt, "the way, and the truth, and the life—"the foundation—the tried ſtone—the precious corner

"ſtone," the ſtrength and ſecurity of the building. To deny, explain away, or neglect to impart the truths of the everlaſting goſpel, is the way to leave the world in wickedneſs; but, by preaching them in purity, and with ſimplicity, which, we have reaſon to think, will be accompanied with "the demonſtration of the Spirit," ſinners are reconciled unto God, the power of ſin is broken in them, the divine image is formed in them, and upon theſe truths their hopes of eternal life muſt reſt and depend. Let us be ever ready to ſay with the apoſtle Paul, "God forbid that "I ſhould glory, ſave in the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt."* "And let us quicken our diligence, and animate our endeavors, by expreſſing, with the pſalmiſt David, our faith in the perpetuity of his kingdom. "His name ſhall en-"dure for ever: his name ſhall be continued as long as the "ſun: and men ſhall be bleſſed in him; all nations ſhall "call him bleſſed. Bleſſed be the Lord God, the God of "Iſrael, who only doth wondrous things. And bleſſed "be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth "be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen."†

* Gal. vi. 14. † Pſal. lxxii. 17, 18, 19.

A PRACTICAL TREATISE

ON

REGENERATION.

JOHN iii. 3.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

INTRODUCTION.

THE condition on which miniſters of the goſpel hold their office, is extremely awful. "They muſt ren-"der an account unto God" of their fidelity to the ſouls committed to their charge. Their duty and danger, as ſervants of God, are jointly and ſtrongly expreſſed in the commiſſion given to the prophet Ezekiel. "Son of man, "I have made thee a watchman unto the houſe of Iſrael, "therefore hear the word of my mouth, and give them "warning from me. When I ſay unto the wicked, thou "ſhalt ſurely die; and thou giveſt him not warning, nor "ſpeakeſt to warn the wicked from his wicked way to ſave "his life; the ſame wicked man ſhall die in his iniquity, "but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet, if thou "warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedneſs, "nor from his wicked way, he ſhall die in his iniquity: "but thou haſt delivered thy ſoul."*

It is natural for us, in ſuch a ſituation, to be often revolving in our minds this great and weighty truſt. It is

* Ezek. iii. 17, 18, 19.

at once our duty and intereſt, to conſider with all poſſible care, in what way we may have the eaſieſt and moſt effectual acceſs to the hearts of ſinners: what views of divine truth will be moſt convincing; what forms of addreſs will make the ſtrongeſt and moſt laſting impreſſion; in one word, how we may acquit ourſelves of our miniſtry, ſo as to be a "favour of life unto life," to many of thoſe who hear us, and to "deliver our own ſouls" from the blood of thoſe that periſh.

Such, indeed, is the undeniable moment and importance of the truths of the goſpel, that I am often ready to think, it will be eaſy to ſet them in ſo clear and convincing a light, as no perſon of common underſtanding ſhall be able to reſiſt. I am often ready to ſay within myſelf, Surely, if they be warned, they will no more dare to ruſh on the thick boſſes of the Almighty's buckler; ſurely, the boldeſt ſinner muſt tremble at the thoughts of death, judgment and eternity, faſt approaching, and from which it is impoſſible to fly. But, when we ſee, how many are able to ſit unmoved under the moſt awful threatnings from the word of God, how many continue unchanged under the moſt alarming diſpenſations of Providence, our thoughts are immediately carried to the unſearchable depth of divine counſels; and we muſt ſay with our bleſſed Saviour, "Even ſo, Father, for ſo it ſeemed good in thy ſight;"* or with the apoſtle Paul, "But if our goſpel be hid, it is "hid to them that are loſt: in whom the god of this world "hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, leſt the "light of the glorious goſpel of Chriſt, who is the image of "God, ſhould ſhine unto them."†

The ſecret counſel of the moſt High, however, though we muſt adore with reverence, it is impoſſible for us to comprehend. What influence this has upon the final ſtate of particular perſons, no man in the preſent life is, and probably no created being ſhall ever be able fully to explain. This only we know, that it is not ſuch as to take away the guilt of ſin, or deſtroy the efficacy of means. A ſenſe of duty therefore conſtrains us to reſume the ardu-

* Luke x. 21. † 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

ous and difficult taſk, intreating the aſſiſtance and bleſſing of God, under a firm perſuaſion that he will hear the prayer of faith, and make his own word "quick and powerful, "ſharper than any two-edged ſword, piercing even to the "dividing aſunder of ſoul and ſpirit, and of the joints and "the marrow, and a diſcerner of the thoughts and intents "of the heart."

The ſubject I have made choice of, and intend to handle in the enſuing treatiſe, immediately regards the ſubſtance of religion, and is happily as little entangled in controverſy as any that could be named. We are told that "except a man be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom "of God." In this all parties, every profeſſion and denomination of Chriſtians, do or ought to agree. By whatever name you are called, whatſoever leader you profeſs to follow, whatever ordinances you enjoy, if you are not "born again," you ſhall not enter into the kingdom of God.

That manner of preaching the goſpel, explaining or recommending divine truth, appears to me moſt profitable, which brings oftenеſt into view, or, rather, never loſes view of the great and eſſential difference between believers and unbelievers, ſaints and ſinners, heirs of glory and heirs of hell. Theſe are mixed together on earth. They have common privileges as men and citizens. They cannot be certainly diſtinguiſhed by human obſervation; for though the image of God ſhines in a bright and ſenſible manner in ſome on the one hand, and ſome bear very plain and deadly ſymptoms on the other, whoſe ſtate may be determined with little hazard of miſtake; yet, in the intermediate degrees, there are multitudes whoſe real character is known only to God. What then can be ſaid more awakening, and at the ſame time, more certainly true, than that every hearer of the goſpel, and every reader of ſuch a treatiſe as this, is either reconciled to God, and the object of his love, or at enmity with God, having "neither part nor portion" in his favor; and as many as die in this laſt condition, ſhall be the everlaſting monuments of divine wrath. How important a diſtinction! and can

any man refrain from ſaying, "Lord! thou knoweſt all "things—to which of theſe claſſes do I belong?"

But there is ſomething, if poſſible, ſtill more preſſing in the paſſage of ſcripture which I have placed at the head of this diſcourſe. Not only are all men of two different and oppoſite characters now, but all men are originally of one character, unfit for the kingdom of God; unleſs a change has paſt upon them they continue ſo; and, unleſs a change do paſs upon them hereafter, they muſt be for ever excluded. This our Lord introduces with a ſtrong aſſeveration, and ſignal note of importance: "Verily, verily, I ſay un- "to you, Except a man be born again, he cannot ſee the "kingdom of God." Theſe words were ſpoken to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This "maſter in Iſrael" came to Jeſus by night. Convinced he ſeems to have been of the power which attended his miniſtry, but, under a ſtill ſtronger attachment to his worldly intereſt, he durſt not openly avow his conviction. Our Lord, at once to enlighten his mind with the moſt ſalutary of all truths, and level his pride of underſtanding by the manner of conveying it, ſaith to him, "Except a man be born again, he "cannot ſee the kingdom of God." This appears to have been extremely aſtoniſhing, by his anſwer in the following verſe; "Nicodemus ſaith unto him, How can a man "be born when he is old? Can he enter the ſecond time "into his mother's womb and be born?"

It is not my purpoſe to give a tedious explication of the paſſage, or entertain the reader with a profuſion of criticiſm upon the words. This expreſſion, the kingdom of God, hath various ſignifications in ſcripture, but chiefly two in the New Teſtament, (1.) The goſpel diſpenſation, or government of the Meſſiah, as diſtinguiſhed from the preceding periods; (2.) The kingdom of heaven, where the ſincere diſciples of Chriſt ſhall be put in full poſſeſſion of the bleſſings of his purchaſe. I take it to be the laſt of theſe, that is, either only, or chiefly intended in this place. Both of them, indeed, may be meant in their proper order, and for their different purpoſes. An open profeſſion and receiving the external badge, was neceſſary to a con-

cealed friend and cowardly diſciple; but a right to the ſpiritual privileges of the goſpel, and the promiſe of eternal life, was the only thing that could make the profeſſion valuable or deſirable. Accordingly our Saviour ſeems to ſpeak of both in his reply to Nicodemus's admiſſion into the viſible church by baptiſm, and renovation by the Holy Ghoſt. Jeſus anſwered, Verily I ſay unto thee, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he "cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

I am ſenſible that regeneration or the new-birth is a ſubject, at preſent, very unfaſhionable; or, at leaſt, a ſtile of language which hath gone very much into deſuetude. It is, however, a ſubject of unſpeakable moment, or, rather, it is the one ſubject in which all others meet as in a centre. The grand enquiry, in compariſon of which every thing elſe, how excellent ſoever, is but ſpecious trifling. What doth it ſignify, though you have food to eat in plenty, and variety of raiment to put on, if you are not born again: if after a few mornings and evenings ſpent in unthinking mirth, ſenſuality and riot, you die in your ſins and lie down in ſorrow? What doth it ſignify, though you are well accompliſhed in every other reſpect, to act your part in life, if you meet at laſt with this repulſe from the Supreme Judge, "Depart from me, I know you not, ye workers of iniquity."

If this ſubject is, indeed, unfaſhionable and neglected, we are miſerably deceiving ourſelves. If a new nature is neceſſary, to attempt to repair and new model the old will be found to be loſt labor. If the ſpring is polluted and continues ſo, what a vain and fruitleſs attempt is it to endeavor, by addition, or by foreign mixture, to purify the ſtreams. Juſt ſo it is by no means ſufficient, or, to ſpeak more properly, it is altogether impoſſible, to reform the irregularities and vicious lives of ſinners, and bring them to a real conformity to the law of God, till their hearts are renewed and changed. It is like rearing up an old fabric, adding to its towers, and painting it walls, while the foundation is gone. See what the prophet Ezekiel ſays of ſuch fooliſh builders, "Wo to the fooliſh prophets—becauſe, "even becauſe they have ſeduced my people, ſaying, Peace; "and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and

"lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar: ſay unto "them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it ſhall "fall: there ſhall be an overflowing ſhower, and ye, O "great hailſtones, ſhall fall, and a ſtormy wind ſhall rent "it." *

But, perhaps, the ſubſtance of the doctrine is retained while the language is held in deriſion. We are told, it is but a figurative expreſſion, and the ſame in its meaning with repentance or reformation. Doubtleſs it is ſo. And it were greatly to be wiſhed, that many did thoroughly underſtand what is implied in repentance unto life. But the reader is intreated to obſerve, that it is a metaphor frequently uſed in the holy ſcripture. I think, alſo, it is a metaphor of peculiar propriety and force; well adapted to bring into view both the nature of the change which it deſcribes, and the means by which it is accompliſhed. If there are any who in writing, or ſpeaking on this ſubject, have introduced or invented unſcriptural phraſes, and gone into unintelligible myſticiſm, this is neither wonderful in itſelf, nor ought it to be any injury or diſparagement to the truth. There is no ſubject either of divine or human learning, on which ſome have not written weakly, fooliſhly or erroneouſly; but that ought not to excite any averſion to the doctrine itſelf, which hath been perverted or abuſed. I pray, that God may enable me to write upon this intereſting ſubject, in a clear, intelligible and convincing manner; to ſupport the truth from the evidence of ſcripture and reaſon; to reſolve, in a ſatisfying manner, any objections that may ſeem to lie againſt it; but, above all, to carry it home with a perſuaſive force upon the conſcience and heart. I contend for no phraſes of man's invention, but ſuch as I find in the holy ſcriptures; from theſe I am reſolved, through the grace of God, never to depart. And, in the mean time, I adopt the words of the eminent and uſeful Dr. Doddridge, "If this doctrine, in "one form or another, be generally taught by my brethren "in the miniſtry, I rejoice in it for their own ſakes, as well "as for that of the people who are under their care."

* Ezek. xiii. 10, 11.

The plan of the following treatiſe is this:

I. To make ſome general obſervations upon the metaphor uſed by the apoſtle John, "Except a man be born "again;" and the ſame or ſimilar expreſſions to be found in other parts of the word of God.

II. To ſhew wherein this change doth properly and directly conſiſt, together with ſome of its principal evidences and effects.

III. To ſhew by what ſteps, or by what means it is uſually brought about.

IV. In the laſt place, to improve the ſubject by a few practical addreſſes to perſons of different characters.

CHAP. I.

Some general observations on the metaphor used by the apostle John, EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN AGAIN, *and the same or similar expressions to be found in other parts of the word of God.*

IT deſerves the ſerious attention of every Chriſtian, that, as this declaration was made by our Saviour in a very ſolemn manner, and by a very peculiar metaphor, ſo this is not the ſingle paſſage in which the ſame metaphor is uſed. We find it in the apoſtle Paul's epiſtle to Titus, "Not by works of righteouſneſs which we have done, but "according to his mercy he ſaved us, by the waſhing of "regeneration, and renewing of the holy Ghoſt."* We find one perfectly ſimilar to it, in the ſame apoſtle's ſecond epiſtle to the Corinthians, "Therefore if any man be in "Chriſt, he is a new creature; old things are paſt away, "behold, all things are become new."† It is elſewhere called a new creation, with reference to the power exerted in the production: "For we are his workmanſhip, crea-"ted in Chriſt Jeſus unto good words, which God hath "before ordained that we ſhould walk in them."‡ It is ſtill a figure of the ſame kind that is uſed when we are exhorted "to put off, concerning the former converſation, "the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful "luſts: and to be renewed in the ſpirit of our mind; and "put on the new man, which after God is created in righ-"teouſneſs, and true holineſs."* To name no more paſ-ſages, the real believer is ſaid to be "born of God;"† in which the very expreſſion of the text is repeated, and the change attributed to God as his proper work.

Whoever believes in the perfection of the ſcriptures will readily admit, that it is intended we ſhould learn ſomething from this very way of ſpeaking itſelf. Let us therefore conſider what may be ſafely deduced from it. And, as I would not willingly ſtrain the metaphor, and

* Titus iii. 5. † 2 Cor. v. 17. ‡ Epheſ. ii. 10.

* Epheſ. iv. 22, 23, 24. † 1 John v. 4.

draw from it any uncertain concluſion; ſo it is no part of my deſign to run it out into an extraordinary length. Many ſmaller reſemblances might eaſily be formed between the image and the truth, but they would be more fanciful than uſeful. The reader is only intreated to attend to a few leading truths, which ſeem naturally to ariſe from this metaphor, and may be both ſupported and illuſtrated from the whole tenor of ſcripture doctrine.

SECT. I.

I. *From this expreſſion,* EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN AGAIN HE CANNOT SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD, *we may learn the* GREATNESS *of that change which muſt paſs upon every child of Adam before he can become an heir of life.*

NO ſtronger expreſſion could have been choſen to ſignify a great and remarkable change of ſtate and character, whether we take the metaphor in a ſtricter or a looſer ſenſe. If we may take the metaphor in a ſtricter ſenſe, it may be intended to point out the change of ſtate in an infant newly born, from what it was in immediately before the birth. The manner of its exiſtence, of deriving its nouriſhment, the uſe and application of its faculties, and its deſires and enjoyments, are all intirely different. If we take the metaphor in a looſer ſenſe, being born may be conſidered as the beginning of our exiſtence. To this ſenſe we ſeem to be directed by the other expreſſions of being created in Chriſt Jeſus, and made new creatures. Does not this ſtill teach us the greatneſs of the change? We muſt be entirely different from what we were before, as one creature differs from another, or as that which begins to be at any time, is not, nor cannot be the ſame with what did formerly exiſt.

This may alſo be well ſupported from a variety of other paſſages of ſcripture, and is a conſequence of different truths contained in the word of God. For example, our natural ſtate is, in ſcripture, compared to death, and our recovery to our being reſtored to life. Thus the a-

poſtle Paul in writing to the Epheſians ſays, "And you "hath he quickened who were dead in treſpaſſes and ſins." And a little after, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for "his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we "were DEAD in ſins, hath quickened us together with "Chriſt."* To the ſame purpoſe the apoſtle John ſays, "We know that we have paſſed from DEATH to life."† The change is ſometimes deſcribed by paſſing from darkneſs to light, than which two things none can ſtand in greater oppoſition to one another. "Ye were ſometimes "darkneſs, but now are ye light in the Lord."‡ Every one muſt be ſenſible how eaſy it would be to multiply paſſages of the ſame kind. But this I forbear, and only wiſh we had all of us a deep impreſſion of the meaning and importance of theſe upon our hearts.

It will not be improper, however, to obſerve how plainly the ſame truth appears from the power which the ſcripture repreſents as exerted in bringing a ſinner from a ſtate of nature to a ſtate of grace. It is conſtantly affirmed to be the work of God, the effect of his power, nay, the exceeding greatneſs of his power. "By grace ye are ſaved, "through faith, and that not of yourſelves, it is the gift of "God."* "Work out your own ſalvation with fear and "trembling, for it is God that worketh in you to will and "to do of his good pleaſure.† And what is the exceed-"ing greatneſs of his power to us ward who believe, ac-"cording to the working of his mighty power which he "wrought in Chriſt when he raiſed him from the dead."‡ Now is there any need of a divine agent to perform a work of no moment? Would it be celebrated as an effect of the power of God, if it were not truly great?

Let me now, in the moſt earneſt manner, beſeech every perſon who reads theſe lines, to conſider deliberately with himſelf what is the import of this truth, and how firmly it is eſtabliſhed. It appears that regeneration, repentance, converſion, or call it what you will, is a very great change from the ſtate in which every man comes into the world.

* Epheſ. ii. 1, 4, 5. † 1 John iii. 14. † Epheſ. v. 8. * Eph. ii. 8. † Phil. ii. 12. ‡ Eph. i. 19.

This appears from our Saviour's aſſertion, that we muſt be "born again." It appears from a great variety of other ſcripture phraſes, and is the certain conſequence of ſome of the moſt eſſential doctrines of the goſpel.

With what jealouſy ought this to fill many of the ſtate of their ſouls? How ſlight and inconſiderable a thing is it that with multitudes paſſes for religion? eſpecially in theſe days of ſerenity and ſunſhine to the church, when they are not compelled by danger to weigh the matter with deliberation? A few cold forms, a little outward decency, ſome faint deſires, rather than endeavors, is all they can afford for ſecuring their everlaſting happineſs. Can the weakneſs and inſufficiency of theſe things poſſibly appear in a ſtronger light than when true religion is conſidered as a new creation, and a ſecond birth? If the inſpired writers be allowed to expreſs themſelves either with propriety or truth, it is painful to think of the unhappy deluded ſtate of ſo great a number of our fellow-ſinners.

Will ſo great a change take place, and yet have no viſible effect? Had any great change happened in your worldly circumſtances, from riches to poverty, or from poverty to riches, all around you would have ſpeedily diſcerned it. Had any ſuch change happened in your health, it had been impoſſible to conceal it. Had it happened in your intellectual accompliſhments, from ignorance to knowledge, it would have been quickly celebrated. How comes it then to be quite undiſcernable, when it is from ſin to holineſs? I am ſenſible that men are very ingenious in juſtifying their conduct, and very ſucceſsful in deceiving themſelves. They will tell us that religion is a hidden thing, not to be ſeen by the world, but lying open to his view who judgeth the ſecrets of all hearts. And doubtleſs this is, in one view, a great truth: true religion is not given to oſtentation; diffident of itſelf, it is unwilling to promiſe much, leſt it ſhould be found wanting. But it ought to be conſidered that, however concealed the inward principle may be, the practical effects muſt of neceſſity appear. As one table of the moral law conſiſts entirely of our duty to others, whoever is born again, and renewed in the ſpirit

of his mind, will be found a quite different perſon from what he was before, in his converſation with his fellow-creatures.

Hypocritical pretences to extraordinary ſanctity are indeed highly criminal in themſelves, and extremely odious in the ſight of God. But the preſent age does not ſeem to have the leaſt tendency to this extreme. There is another thing much more common, not leſs abſurd, and infinitely more dangerous to mankind in general: a demand upon the public, that, by an extraordinary effort of charity, they ſhould always ſuppoſe the reality of religion in the heart, when there is not the leaſt ſymptom of it in the life. Nay, ſome are hardly ſatisfied even with this, but inſiſt that men ſhould believe well of others, not only without, but againſt evidence. A bad opinion expreſſed of a man, even upon the moſt open inſtances of prophanity, is often anſwered with, "What have you to do to judge the heart?" It is amazing to think what inward conſolation ſinners derive to themſelves from this claim of forbearance from their fellow-creatures. Let me beſeech all ſuch to conſider, that as God cannot be deceived, and will not be mocked, ſo in truth they uſually deceive none but themſelves. Every human affection, when it is ſtrong and lively, will diſcover itſelf by its apparent effects; and it is as true of religious affections as of any other, that "the tree is known by its "fruits."

But if they have reaſon to ſuſpect themſelves whoſe change is not viſible to others, how much more thoſe, who, if they deal faithfully, muſt confeſs they are quite ſtrangers to any ſuch thing in their own hearts. I do not mean that every perſon ſhould be able to give an account of the time and manner of his converſion. This is often effected in ſo ſlow and gradual a manner, that it cannot be confined to a preciſe or particular period. But ſurely thoſe who are no way ſenſible of any change in the courſe of their affections, and the objects at which they are pointed, can ſcarcely think that they are born again, or be able to affix a proper meaning to ſo ſtrong an expreſſion. I have read on obſervation of an eminent author, That thoſe who cannot remember the time when they were ignorant of

unlearned, have reaſon to conclude that they are ſo ſtill: becauſe, however ſlow and inſenſible the ſteps of improvement have been, the effects will at laſt clearly appear, by compariſon with an uncultivated ſtate. In the ſame manner, whoever cannot remember the time when he ſerved the former luſts in his ignorance, has reaſon to conclude that no change deſerving the name of regeneration, has ever yet taken place.

It will be, perhaps, accounted an exception to this, that ſome are ſo early formed for the ſervice of God, by his bleſſing on a pious education, and happily preſerved from ever entering upon the deſtructive paths of vice, that they cannot be ſuppoſed to recollect the time when they were at enmity with God. But this is an objection of no conſequence. The perſons here deſcribed have generally ſo much tenderneſs of conſcience, ſo deep a ſenſe of the evil of ſin, that, of all others, they will moſt readily diſcover and confeſs the workings of corruption in their own hearts, and that "law in their members that warreth againſt the "law of God in their minds." They will be of all others moſt ſenſible of the growth of the new, and mortification of the old nature; and will often remember the folly and vanity of youth, in inſtances that by moſt others would have been reckoned perfectly harmleſs.

What hath been ſaid in this ſection, is expreſsly deſigned to awaken ſuch ſecure and careleſs formaliſts as may have any general belief of the word of God. To be born again muſt be a great change. Can you then ſuppoſe that you have undergone this not only without any application to it, but without ſo much as being ſenſible of it, or being able to diſcover its proper effects.

SECT. II.

This expression, EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN AGAIN, *and other similar expressions, imply, that the change here intended is not merely partial, but universal.*

A NEW birth evidently implies an univerſal change. It muſt be of the whole man, not in ſome particu-

lars, but in all without exception. As this is a truth which naturally ariſes from the ſubject, ſo it is a truth of the laſt moment and importance, which merits the moſt ſerious attention of all thoſe who deſire to keep themſelves from illuſion and ſelf-deceit in this intereſting queſtion.

Innumerable are the deceits of Satan. If he cannot keep ſinners in abſolute blindneſs and ſecurity, which is his firſt attempt, he induſtriouſly endeavors to pervert their views of religion, either by cauſing them to miſtake appearances for realities, or ſubſtituting a part for the whole. This branch of the ſubject is of the more conſequence, that I am perſuaded it is peculiarly applicable to great numbers of the ordinary hearers of the goſpel as ſuch. The great bulk of thoſe who finally fall ſhort of everlaſting life, though they lived under the adminiſtration of word and ſacraments, are ruined by miſtakes of this kind. There are few of them, if any at all, who have at no time, through their whole lives, any ſerious impreſſions about their ſouls, or do nothing in the way of religion. There are ſtill fewer who are ſpeculative unbelievers, and fortify themſelves in their prophane practices, by irreligious principles. The far greateſt number do ſome things, and abſtain from others, to quiet the inward complaints of conſcience, and muſt have ſome broken reed or other on which they may reſt their eternal hopes.

It might ſerve in general to alarm ſuch perſons, that, as I have obſerved above, the change is evidently very great, and therefore they ought not eaſily to ſuppoſe that it is already paſt. But I now add ſomething ſtill more awakening, that the change, however great, if it is only partial, is not ſuch as is neceſſary to ſalvation. There may be a change truly great in ſome particulars, from one period of life to another, not only ſenſible to a man's ſelf, but viſible and remarkable to others about him, which yet is not ſaving, becauſe it is not general, or becauſe it is not permanent. The truth of this obſervation, that the change muſt be univerſal, appears from the conſtant tenor of the holy ſcriptures. Thus the Pſalmiſt ſays, " then ſhall I not be " aſhamed, when I have reſpect unto ALL thy command-

" ments."* And the apoſtle James, " Whoſoever ſhall " keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he " is guilty of ALL."† It is indeed, ſo much the language of ſcripture, that it is needleſs to inſiſt upon it. God will be ſerved without a rival, and will not ſhare dominion with any in the human heart. But what I am perſuaded will be of moſt uſe upon this ſubject, will be to point out, in a few particulars, by what means a partial change is ſometimes brought about, and how this differs from the ſaving and univerſal.

1. In the firſt place, ſometimes a partial change in point of morals, is produced merely by a natural or accidental change in age, temper, or ſituation. There are different ſins to which men are addicted in the different periods or ſtages of the human life. Theſe, of conſequence, give way to, and are ſucceeded by one another. There are, indeed, inſtances of extraordinary depravation in ſome perſons, who " ſelling themſelves" like Ahab, to work iniquity, become the ſlaves of almoſt every evil habit incident to human nature. Theſe, however, are eſteemed monſters even by the world in general, who continue in the commiſſion of every ſin while they can, and burn with deſires after them when they cannot. But it often happens that the folly and levity, nay, even the diſſolute licentiouſneſs of youth, gives way to the ambitious projects of riper years, and the hurry of an active life; and theſe again are ſucceeded by ſordid, ſelfiſh, and covetous old age. In many caſes the ſins are changed, but the diſpoſition to ſin, and averſion from God, remains ſtill the ſame. One ſin may be eaſily ſupplanted by another, in a heart that is wholly a ſtranger to renewing grace. How greatly then may men deceive themſelves, by drawing favorable concluſions from even a great and remarkable change in ſome one or more particulars, while they continue under the government of ſins of a different kind. It is of ſmall conſequence which of the commandments of God are tranſgreſſed, ſince they are all of equal and indiſpenſible obligation. It is of little moment for a man to get quit of one

* Pſal. cxix. 6. † James ii. 10.

diſtemper, by contracting another equally inveterate, and as certainly mortal. What profit was it to the Phariſee that he was not an extortioner like the publican? his pride rendered him ſtill more odious and deteſtable in the ſight of God.

I may add here, that beſides the common and neceſſary change of age and temper, a change of ſituation, employment and connections, will ſometimes wean a man from one ſin, and introduce an attachment to another. If the temptation is removed, the fire may be extinguiſhed for want of fuel. The inclination to ſin in ſome kinds may be thus occaſionally weakened, or the commiſſion of it rendered impoſſible. It is eaſy to ſee that ſuch a change as this can be of no avail in the ſight of God; or rather, to ſpeak more properly, it is only an apparent, and no real change at all. It is a difference of effect from an alteration of circumſtances, but ariſing from the very ſame cauſe. Are there not many who may apply this reflection to themſelves? Are there not many who have ceaſed to ſin in ſome reſpects, becauſe they have begun to ſin in others? Are there not many who are abuſed and deceived by this deluſory view? who take comfort to themſelves by remembering ſome ſpecies of ſins or follies which they now ſincerely and heartily deſpiſe? Take heed that this be not entirely owing to your progreſs through life, or a change of circumſtances and ſituation. Are you not ſtill living as much to yourſelves as ever? as much averſe from a life of love to, and communion with God, as ever? Remember, that though your conduct may be wiſer and more prudent, and your character more reſpectable in the world than before, this is no proof of regeneration; and "except "a man be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of "God."

2. Sometimes a partial change is produced by ſtrong occaſional convictions, either from the word or providence of God. There are many inſtances in which convictions of ſin are raiſed in the minds of the hearers of the goſpel, which continue in great force for ſome time, and have a partial effect, which ſtill remains. Even a Felix is ſometimes made to tremble at the thoughts of a judgment to

come. It is very certain that natural conſcience, when awakened by the word of God, will both reſtrain from ſin, and excite to duty, even while ſin hath the dominion upon the whole. As the ſpirit luſteth againſt the fleſh, and the fleſh againſt the ſpirit, in believers, ſo conſcience, the divine witneſs in the hearts of unbelievers, may urge to the practice of duty in a certain meaſure, when it is not able to change the heart inwardly and univerſally. It may deter from ſins to which the attachment is leſs ſtrong, even whilſt it is not able to expel a darling luſt, or dethrone a favorite idol.

There is a remarkable example of this character in Herod, and his behavior to John Baptiſt. We are told by the evangeliſt Mark, that Herod "feared John, knowing "that he was a juſt man and an holy, and obſerved him, "and when he heard him he did many things, and heard "him gladly."* That is to ſay, he did many ſuch things as were leaſt contrary to the bent of corrupt affection. But that the change was not entire is plain; for when he was reproved for his beloved luſt, it only ſerved to inflame his reſentment, and he took away the life of his reprover. We find that Ahab king of Iſrael, of whom it is ſaid, that he "did more to provoke the Lord God of Iſrael to anger "than all that went before him," yet humbled himſelf on the denunciation of divine wrath, and was ſo far penitent as ſerved to procure a ſuſpenſion of the temporal ſtroke.

It appears, indeed, from innumerable inſtances in ſcripture, as well as from daily experience, that there are temporary convictions raiſed in the minds of many, both by the word and providence of God. It is alſo certain, that there are imperfect effects of theſe convictions, which often continue a conſiderable time, or rather are perpetual, though they are ſtill only partial. Many ſinners, though they continue unrenewed, yet dare not return to the ſame unbounded licence as before. Nay, there are ſome ſins, under the penal effects of which they have ſeverely ſmarted, which they never dare afterwards to indulge. We have a very remarkable national inſtance of this imperfect reformation in the Jews. They were at

* Mark vi. 20.

firſt ſhamefully and amazingly prone to idolatry, and continued ſo under repeated ſtrokes, till the terrible deſolation they met with at the Babyloniſh captivity; from that period however, notwithſtanding their great guilt in other particulars, they never returned to idolatry, but to this day continue to have the deepeſt abhorrence of that capital crime.

There are many particular perſons in the ſame ſituation. Some ſins which have lain heavy on their conſciences, or for which they have ſeverely ſuffered in the courſe of Providence, they will not commit; but others, one or more, which may be called their "own iniquity," they hold faſt, and will not let them go. Are there not different degrees of depravation and obſtinacy to be found in different ſinners, as well as different degrees of holineſs, obedience, and ſubmiſſion in the children of God? And though there is uſually a progreſs in the firſt to the worſe, as well as in the laſt to the better, yet ſtill there may be particular ſins which they dare not commit, and particular duties which they diligently diſcharge. Nay, this partial character is often the very thing that blinds their minds, and continues their ſecurity in an habitual alienation of heart from the life and power of true religion.

Are there not many cuſtomary Chriſtians who have a form of godlineſs, and, though they are utter ſtrangers to communion with God, yet nothing will induce them to part with their form. Are there not many whom it would be unjuſt to brand with the groſſer crimes of prophane ſwearing, ſenſual riot, or unclean luſt, who yet have their hearts ſet upon the world, which they love and purſue, and on which they reſt with complacency, as their ſweeteſt portion? Are all outwardly decent and ſober perſons ready to take up the croſs, and follow their maſter without the camp? Are they ready to forſake "houſes and brethren, "and ſiſters and lands, yea, and their own life alſo, for "his ſake and the goſpel's?" And yet without this they cannot be his diſciples. There are many hard ſayings in religion, which ordinary profeſſors cannot bear, and with which they never comply. Remember the caſe of the young man who came to our Saviour, and ſpoke with ſo much modeſty and diſcretion, but could not bear this

great trial: "Then Jeſus beholding him, loved him, and "ſaid unto him, One thing thou lackeſt: go thy way, ſell "whatſoever thou haſt, and give to the poor, and thou "ſhalt have treaſure in heaven; and come, take up the "croſs and follow me. And he was ſad at that ſaying, "and went away grieved, for he had great poſſeſſions."*

3. Sometimes a partial change is produced, in a great meaſure, even by the love and attachment which men have to ſome one darling and governing ſin. The leſs willing they are to cut off the right hand and to pluck out the right eye, the more zealous and diligent they will be in other things, to atone for the indulgence, or to cover it from their own obſervation. How careful is a Phariſee to tythe mint, aniſe, and cummin, while he neglects the weightier matters of the law? How does he "make broad "his phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of his gar-"ment," while he is defective in "judgment, mercy and "faith?" How did the ancient Jews come with thouſands of rams, and ten thouſand rivers of oil, while living in the habitual neglect of ſome of the moſt important branches of the divine law? We have an appoſite example of this in the conduct of Saul, when ſent againſt Amalek: he ſpared of the ſpoil what was good, though he was commanded to deſtroy it, and then pretended to make a free uncommanded offering of ſacrifice unto God, for which he met with this juſt and ſevere reprimand: "Hath the Lord "as great delight in burnt-offerings and ſacrifices, as in "obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better "than ſacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."† We ſee every day innumerable inſtances of the ſame kind; when there is any ſin which men are willing to ſpare, which they defend with arguments, or palliate with excuſes, they are ſo much the more ready to overdo in ſuch duties as are not ſo contrary to the preſent current of unſanctified affection.—From all this you will plainly ſee, that no man ought to judge of himſelf by the greatneſs of the change in any particular, unleſs it is univerſal, and without exception.

*, Mark x, 21, 22. † 1 Sam. xv. 22.

SECT. III.

From these words, EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN AGAIN, HE CANNOT SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD, *and other similar expressions in the holy scriptures, we may infer that the change here intended is not merely* EXTERNAL *and* IMPERFECT, *but* INWARD, ESSENTIAL *and* COMPLEAT.

I MIGHT have divided this obſervation into two parts, and treated of them ſeparately, firſt ſhewing that it is not an outward and apparent only, but an internal and real change; ſecondly, that it is not an imperfect change, or difference in degree only, but a compleat and eſſential change of the whole character. But as the illuſtration of theſe two muſt have neceſſarily in a great meaſure coincided, and they are very cloſely connected, I have choſen to join them together.

That what ſhall be ſaid on this ſubject may be the more uſeful and profitable, I will endeavor to explain, in as diſtinct and ſimple a manner as I am able, what you are to underſtand by the above remark. The firſt part of it will be moſt eaſily comprehended, that it is not an external only, but an internal change; that the moſt apparently ſtrict and regular converſation, the moſt faultleſs diſcharge of outward duties, will not be ſufficient, while the heart continues enſlaved to ſin in general, or under the dominion of any particular luſt. The other part of the remark is, that the change muſt not only be imperfect, or in degree, but eſſential and compleat. That is to ſay, it is not ſufficient that a man be ſomewhat leſs wicked than before, that he not only gives up ſome ſins, but uſe moderation in others; nay, though he be under ſome degree of reſtraint univerſally, if ſtill there is not what may be called an eſſential change of character, if ſtill ſin has the aſcendancy upon the whole, though its dominion be not ſo uncontrolled as before.

Sin may certainly have the chief ſeat in the affections, though it hath not altogether quiet and peaceable poſſeſſion. There muſt always be ſome governing principle, which, properly ſpeaking, conſtitutes the character. As our Sa-

viour tells us, "No man can ſerve two maſters; for either "he will hate the one and love the other, or elſe he will "hold to the one and deſpiſe the other; ye cannot ſerve "God and mammon."* Grace and corruption are oppoſite in their natures, and mutually deſtructive of each other, ſo far as they prevail: and therefore the great queſtion is, not how far any of them is altered from what it was formerly in itſelf, but how far it prevails in oppoſition to the other, and hath truly the government of the man. I find it extremely difficult to communicate this truth in a ſimple and intelligible manner, ſo as to be level to the meaneſt capacities. And it is little wonder; for here lies the chief part of the deceitfulneſs of ſin. It will, I hope, be better underſtood by what is now to be added, both for its proof and illuſtration.

That what I have above aſſerted is agreeable to the analogy of faith, and a part of the will of God, may eaſily be made appear. It is the conſtant uniform doctrine of the holy ſcriptures. There we find it is the peculiar prerogative of God, that he ſeeth and judgeth the heart. By this his knowledge is diſtinguiſhed from, and excels all created underſtanding, and, therefore, as no appearance will deceive, ſo no inſincere profeſſion will be accepted by him: "For the Lord ſeeth not as man ſeeth, for man "looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh "on the heart."† To this purpoſe is the exhortation of David to his ſon Solomon: "And thou Solomon, my ſon, "know thou the God of thy father, and ſerve him with a "perfect heart and with a willing mind, for the Lord "ſearcheth all hearts, and underſtandeth all the imagina-"tions of the thoughts."‡

The ſtreſs that is laid on this in ſcripture, and the frequent repetition of the word "heart," can hardly have eſcaped the notice even of the moſt curſory reader, or the moſt ſuperficial obſerver. We find the conſent of the heart required as indiſpenſibly and chiefly neceſſary, and that as diſtinguiſhed from outward and apparent obedience, which, without it, will be of no value. "My ſon, give me

* Matt. vi. 24. † 1 Sam. xvi. 7. ‡ 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.

"thine heart," says Solomon, "and let thine eyes observe "my ways."* We find an inward change of heart and disposition promised by God as the work of his Spirit and grace: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit "will I put within you; and I will take away the stony "heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of "flesh, and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause "you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judg-"ments and do them."† We find the same thing implored by penitent sinners, as necessary to their recovery: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right "spirit within me."‡ And we find the duty of returning penitents prescribed in the very same terms: "Cast away "from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have trans-"gressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for "why will ye die, O house of Israel."*

I shall only further observe, that we find in scripture an integrity of heart required to real religion; that is to say, that the love of God must be the commanding governing principle, that there must be no divided or rival affection suffered to remain: "For the Lord your God proveth you, "to know whether you love the Lord your God with all "your heart and with all your soul."† The first duty of "the moral law runs in these terms: "Thou shalt love "the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, "and with all thy mind:"‡ which, as a precept of the gospel, is explained by the following passage; "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; "and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not wor-"thy of me."* If, to any, the collecting of so many passages of scripture seem tedious, it is entirely owing to the abundance and commonness of them. It were easy to have added ten times the number to those which have been already quoted, a circumstance to which I particularly beg the reader's attention, as it sets in the strongest light the certainty and importance of this truth.

Having so far confirmed and established the observation from the sacred oracles, I would willingly illustrate and

* Prov. xxiii. 26. † Ezek. xxxvi. 26. 27. ‡ Psal. li. 10 * Ezek. xviii. 31. † Deut. xiii. 3. ‡ Matt. xxii. 37. * Matt. x. 37.

apply it a little more particularly. And as truth ſeldom receives greater light from any thing than from a diſcovery of the oppoſite errors, I ſhall point out by what means ſometimes an apparent or imperfect change is produced, which is not inward and eſſential. This I apprehend will be effected by a view of the following characters, every where to be met with. 1. A character formed upon a well-conducted ſelfiſh principle. 2. One that is ſupremely governed by reputation, and a deſire of honor and reſpect from men. 3. One that is influenced by a religious principle, in which a ſpirit of bondage and ſlaviſh fear chiefly predominates.

In the firſt place, there is a character in the world which may be ſaid to be formed upon a well-conducted ſelfiſh principle. It may be ſaid indeed, in general, of every unrenewed perſon, that in ſuch a heart God is dethroned, and ſelf, in one ſhape or other, is exalted, is ſet in his place, and reigns in his ſtead: but what I have chiefly in view at preſent is, to point out the character of thoſe who, in all thoſe parts of their conduct which aſſume the name of religion or of virtue, are chiefly acted not by a ſenſe of duty, but by an intention to promote their own preſent ſatisfaction and comfort. It is the language of experience and ſound reaſon, as well as of the word of God, "that the "wicked worketh a deceitful work." There are many immediate and ſenſible bad conſequences of vice and wickedneſs. Some who have already ſmarted under their effects, may, therefore, in many inſtances avoid them, without any due ſenſe of the evil of ſin, as againſt the law of God, or taking his ſervice as their hearty and unfeigned choice.

Let us give ſome examples of this. A man may avoid intemperance and exceſs, purely or chiefly, becauſe it is hurtful to his health, and introduces ſuch diſorders into his frame as incapacitates him for reliſhing even the pleaſures of the world and of ſenſe. A man may find from experience, that being injurious to others in word or in deed, nay, even reſenting the injuries done to himſelf, raiſes up ſo many enemies, and ſo inflames every little incident, as greatly diſturb his peace. He may therefore

be patient and forbearing, whilſt it is not owing to any meekneſs of mind, or government of his paſſions from a ſenſe of duty, but merely to the ſtrength of his judgment, and his falling upon the fitteſt way of promoting his own eaſe. It is preciſely this ſort of men who may often be obſerved to be reaſonable, modeſt, and ſelf-denied, in their deportment in the world in general, but ſavage and tyrannical, or peeviſh and diſcontented in their own families, where there are none upon equal terms with them, or able to make a formidable reſiſtance to them. A wiſe man may, upon the whole, by reflection diſcover, that what gives the higheſt reliſh and poignancy to every ſenſible enjoyment is, to habituate himſelf to ſome degree of ſelf-denial, to conduct them with decency, and to uſe them with ſobriety and moderation. When this conduct, as indeed is commonly the caſe, is the fruit of experience, it is ſo ſenſible a change, that it often paſſes itſelf not only on others, but even on the perſon concerned, for a religious change. But if the change is not inward as well as outward, if the affections ſtill flow in the ſame channel, though they are better hemmed in, and preſerved from impetuoſity and exceſs; if the ſource of happineſs is ſtill the ſame, though it is more ſparingly or more wiſely indulged, it is plainly the old nature, and the perſon cannot be ſaid to be born again. He is outwardly regular, and comparatively leſs wicked than before, but cannot be ſaid to love and ſerve God "with all his heart and with all his ſoul."

We may learn from this very important leſſon, to diſtinguiſh between human virtue and religion, between a decent and blameleſs carriage upon motives of preſent conveniency, and a new nature, or a gracious ſtate. I know ſome are highly diſſatisfied at making any diſtinction of this nature; but is it not plainly poſſibly that ſuch a character as is deſcribed above may exiſt? Is it not alſo plain, for reaſons too obvious to be inſiſted on, that it cannot deſerve the name of a new or ſpiritual birth? And is it not, therefore the duty of miniſters of the goſpel to put men in mind of this, as well as every other ſource of ſelf-deceit? Nay, the neceſſity in one view is greateſt, in ſuch a caſe as this, that we may warn thoſe of their danger who have a

name to live while they are dead, that we may ſhake the ſtrong-hold of the preſumptuous ſelf-applauding formaliſt, who is often more deaf and inſenſible to the things that belong to his peace, than the moſt abandoned profligate.

Is there any ready to ſay, Why do you take upon you to judge the heart, and aſcribe what you muſt confeſs to be excellent and amiable in itſelf, to wrong motives and an irreligious principle? I anſwer, I judge no man's heart; but, while I leave it to the deciſive judgment of God, would willingly ſubject its actings to its own review. It is but an appeal to the inward court of conſcience, or rather a citation of the perſon, with conſcience as the witneſs, to the tribunal of him that "trieth the reins and the heart." But, after all, there is no difficulty in going a ſtep farther. We may often know the "tree by its fruits." We may often diſcern the falſehood of theſe plauſible moraliſts, by an habitual worldlineſs of temper and converſation, by a great indifference about the ordinances and worſhip of God; nay, ſometimes a bold and avowed oppoſition to vital experimental religion, to the language and exerciſes of the ſpiritual life.

To prevent the miſunderſtanding of what hath been ſaid, it will be neceſſary to obſerve, that I intend not to deny the propriety or the uſe of theſe aſſiſtant motives, as they may be called, which ariſe from the preſent benefit and advantage of true religion. I have ſaid only, that the obedience or reformation which flows from no higher principle, is not ſuch as will be acceptable to God; it is not that change which is neceſſary before we can enter into life eternal. There are, however, various uſes to which theſe conſiderations may juſtly, and ought in duty to be applied. They ought to ſatisfy us of the excellence and truth of religion in general, and to be produced in oppoſition to the licentious and prophane topics of converſation, ſo often to be met with in promiſcuous company. When any one begins to declaim in favor of luſt and ſenſuality, and alledges that nature has given us deſires, and why ſhould it give them, but in order to their gratification? Let the hearer immediately obſerve, that, by the corruption of nature, our appetites are greatly inflamed, and not at all

in a ſound ſtate; that, as is plain from the moſt inconteſted experience, the beſt and moſt deſireable enjoyment of any ſenſible delights is, that thankful, ſelf-denied, moderate uſe of them, which the word of God authoriſes or preſcribes.

The ſame reflections may very properly ſerve for awakening groſſer ſinners to a ſenſe of their danger. The prodigal ſeems to have been firſt brought to himſelf by a deep reflection upon his own folly. But he did not reſt here: he did not content himſelf with endeavoring to recover, by ſobriety and induſtry, the wealth which he had ſquandered away, but returned to his father for the forgiveneſs of his crime. In the ſame manner, no doubt, the loſs of health, ſubſtance, and reputation, ſhould convince the ſinner of the evil of his ways. This argument is uſed by the apoſtle Paul: "What fruit had ye then in the "things of which ye are now aſhamed *?" But I would never call that religion, which proceeds to no higher views; nor that repentance, which is compleated by no better principle.

Such reflections ſhould alſo be improved by every good man, to impreſs his mind with a deep ſenſe of the goodneſs of God. Every thing that he commands is truly moſt eligible in itſelf, and moſt beneficial to us. His will is as gracious as his authority is abſolute. Religion's "ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are "peace.†" Well might our bleſſed Maſter ſay, "Take "my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek "and lowly in heart, and ye ſhall find reſt unto your ſouls: "for my yoke is eaſy, and my burden is light‡." This ſhould daily diſpoſe us to thankfulneſs to that God who ſurrounds us with his care, and who follows us with loving-kindneſs and with tender mercies. His very reſtraints are favors, his commands are bleſſings.

Is it poſſible to avoid adding, that the ſame views ſhould be made uſe of to fortify us againſt temptation. When a ſenſe of duty is the prevailing deſire, we may very ſafely corroborate it with all theſe inferior conſiderations. It

* Rom. vi. 21. † Prov. iii. 17. ‡ Matt. xi. 29, 30.

ſhould make ſin the more hateful and abominable, and prevent us from yielding to that party which ſtill ſecretly pleads for it in our imperfectly ſanctified hearts.

Before I leave this branch of the ſubject, I muſt ſpeak a few words to ſinners of a different character. If then many decent and regular perſons are nevertheleſs under the wrath of God, what terror ſhould this give to the more openly prophane, who are living in inſtances of groſs wickedneſs? How many are there to be found among us, nay, how many appear from Sabbath to Sabbath in our worſhiping-aſſemblies, who live in the habitual practice of ſome of the moſt notorious crimes? How many, who live in a bold defiance of the truths and laws of our great Maſter, who are not only ſtained with original pollution, but laboring under a daily increaſing load of actual guilt? Are there not ſome ſwearers and blaſphemers of the great and dreadful name of God? Some deſpiſers and prophaners of his holy day? Some who add drunkenneſs to thirſt, waſting the creatures of God by diſſipating their own ſubſtance, defacing the image of God by undermining their own health, at one and the ſame time procuring and haſtening their final deſtruction? Are there not ſome walking in the luſt of uncleanneſs? Some retaining, without reſtitution, the gain of unrighteouſneſs? Is it not ſurpriſing that ſuch do not tremble at the word of God? Can there be any doubt that all of the above characters are unrenewed? Is there any pretence for their deceiving themſelves? There is no juſt excuſe even for the more regular and ſober building their hope on a falſe foundation, but there is not ſo much as a ſhadow of excuſe for them. Dare any ſuch entertain a doubt of a judgment to come? Can any mortal be inſenſible of the precarioufneſs of time? The king of terrors lays his hand upon one after another, as he receives a commiſſion from the King of kings; and it is diſtreſſing to think in what an unprepared ſtate many receive the ſummons, which nevertheleſs they muſt of neceſſity obey.

Whoever thou art who readeſt theſe lines, if thou art yet unrenewed, but particularly if thou art one of thoſe whoſe ſins are open and manifeſt, I beſeech thee in the

moſt earneſt manner, to be reconciled unto God. "Be-
"hold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day
"of ſalvation. God is in Chriſt reconciling the world
"unto himſelf, not imputing their treſpaſſes unto them."
The blood of this Saviour is of infinite value. His Spirit
is of irreſiſtible efficacy. He is "able to ſave to the ut-
"termoſt all that come unto God by him." Delay not
one moment. Give immediate thanks that thou art not
already in the place of torment. Believe in the Son of
God for righteouſneſs and ſtrength. Add not to all thy
other ſins againſt him, by undervaluing his atonement and
deſpairing of mercy. And may it pleaſe God, by his own
power, to reach thy heart, to ſnatch thee as a brand from
the burning, and make thee an everlaſting monument of
his grace and love.

2. In the ſecond place we may often find an appear-
ance of religion or virtue in a character, ſupremely govern-
ed by reputation, or a deſire of reſpect and honor from the
world. I ſay ſupremely governed, becauſe no doubt there
may be a mixture of other principles whilſt this is the
leading, the directing, and the governing view. I am
ſenſible there are ſome who have no other view of any
kind by a religious profeſſion than to deceive others, and
under the fair diſguiſe of piety and ſeeming devotion, to
carry on with more ſecurity and ſucceſs their unrighteous
deſigns. That ſome ſuch are to be found in the world, ſad
experience is a melancholy proof. The greatneſs of their
guilt it is not eaſy to conceive, and ſtill more difficult to
expreſs. As it muſt always proceed upon a known deli-
berate contempt of God, there is uſually ſuch a hardneſs
of heart and ſearedneſs of conſcience attending it, that there
is little probability of making any impreſſion upon them;
or rather to ſpeak more properly, they have all the ſymp-
toms of being given up of God and left to themſelves.
But there is ſomething extremely harſh and unnatural in
ſuſpecting any of wilful deliberate hypocriſy, till it is
plainly and openly detected. The truth is, I am perſuad-
ed, that as it is a dreadful, ſo it is a rare character. The
far greateſt part of thoſe who are under the power of hypo-
criſy, deceive themſelves as much as, or rather more than

the world. Theſe laſt fall more properly in my way to be conſidered, as having undergone a ſeeming or apparent, without any real change.

In order to illuſtrate the character and ſtate of thoſe who are ſupremely governed by reputation or a deſire of honor and reſpect, it will be proper to obſerve, that as the law of God is a tranſcript of his own perfect inherent excellence, true religion muſt be in itſelf amiable and lovely. Nay, it muſt appear ſo even in the eyes of thoſe who are engaged in a ſtated oppoſition to its intereſt. You will ſay, how is this poſſible? Is it not a manifeſt contradiction? I anſwer, That though the ſpirit and principles from which true religion muſt flow, be directly contrary to the bent of an unrenewed heart, yet their effects are both amiable and beneficial. Bad men cannot endure inward mortification and ſelf-denial, being humbled as ſinners in the ſight of God, juſtified freely by his grace, ſanctified by his Spirit, and having nothing whereof to glory. Againſt theſe vital principles of piety the natural mind ſets itſelf with violence, and the unrenewed heart riſes with indignation. But the effect of true religion or a diligent compliance with the duties of the moral law, as it is amiable in itſelf, ſo it is alſo of good report among men. We are told in ſcripture, "that the righteous is "more excellent than his neighbor." And the apoſtle Paul exhorts us to our duty in the following terms: "Finally brethren, whatſoever things are true, whatſoever "things are honeſt, whatſoever things are lovely, whatſo-"ever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, "and if there be any praiſe, think on theſe things."*

Does not this at once diſcover how many may attain to a conſiderable degree of regularity in the practice of their duty, while their governing principle is no better than a deſire of the eſteem of others. That character acquires a value in their eyes, which is in general repute, and will ſet them in the moſt favorable light. This hath often a ſecret and inſenſible influence, to which they themſelves do not attend. What favors the deceit is, that many of

* Phil. iv. 8.

the very ſame duties are commanded in the law of God, and reputable in the ſight of man. They gladly embrace them therefore as the ſervice of God: it pleaſes them to think, they ſhall by this means be acceptable to him. They fondly flatter themſelves, that this is the chief ground of their choice, and are not ſenſible that they are but offering incenſe to their own vanity. Self-partiality often hides the truth from our view, and conceals the chief ſprings and motives of action. Since diſorder was introduced into the human frame by ſin, there is no creature whoſe character is ſo mixed, variable, inconſiſtent, and ſelf-contradictory as man. Other creatures are regular and uniform, ſteadily fulfil their functions; their nature and diſpoſition may be known without ambiguity, and they always reach their end. But man is, as it were, torn to pieces by the conflicting principles of light and darkneſs; and from the different and contrary ſymptoms which often appear, it is hard to tell in what claſs he ſhould be ranged.

From this will evidently appear, the neceſſity of an inward and eſſential change. That which is done to gain the applauſe of men, will never be reckoned an acceptable part of the ſervice of God. On the contrary, he holds it in the higheſt deteſtation. See the exhortation of our Saviour: "Take heed that you do not your alms before "men, to be ſeen of them, otherwiſe ye have no reward of "your Father which is in heaven."* I cannot help obſerving here, that men of this character may be divided into two claſſes, who commonly ſtate themſelves in oppoſition to, and have the greateſt hatred or contempt for each other, and yet are acted by one common principle.

There are ſome who ſeem chiefly to confine their views to a fair and honorable carriage in their correſpondence and commerce between man and man. Theſe are commonly perſons of higher rank, and all who deſire to emulate them, and wiſh to be claſſed with them. In ſuch honor holds the place of religion; or, at leaſt, is a ſuperior and more powerful principle. They would not willingly

* Matt. vi. 1.

ſtain their reputation with any thing that is baſe or mean, according to the ſtandard they have formed to themſelves, of decency of character and dignity of carriage. This ſtandard of decency, however, is very changeable. It is either more narrow or more extenſive, according to the ſentiments of thoſe with whom they moſt frequently converſe. And there is often ſome mixture of religion, which ſerves under, and co-operates with, the commanding motive.

There are vaſt multitudes of this character in the preſent age, who cannot be deſcribed in juſter or more ſignificative terms than thoſe of the apoſtle Paul; they are "conformed to this world." They tread in its ſteps, they act upon its maxims, they aſk its approbation, and they have their reward.

How far ſuch perſons are from being renewed in the ſpirit of their mind, and how much they are the ſervants of men, may be plainly diſcovered by the following ſign; that they are almoſt as much aſhamed of unfaſhionable duties, as of diſhonorable crimes. How different is their boaſted dignity of mind from a truly holy reſolution and chriſtian magnanimity? Are there not ſome, whoſe integrity in ordinary caſes may be depended on, and who would abhor the thoughts of a mean and dirty action, as it is uſually ſtiled, but who would be covered with nearly equal ſhame, if ſurpriſed in any act of devotion, as if detected in diſhoneſty and fraud? How many, who would brave the king of terrors in the field of battle, from a ſenſe of honor; but who, though far from being infidels, have not ſufficient courage to worſhip, in their families, the great Creator and Preſerver of men? Such may ſee the reception they ſhall meet with at laſt, and even feel the juſtice of their own condemnation in theſe words of our Saviour: "Whoever, therefore, ſhall be aſhamed of me, and of my "words, in this adulterous and ſinful generation, of him "alſo ſhall the Son of man be aſhamed, when he cometh "in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels."*

* Mark viii. 38.

There are others of a different ſtamp, who ſeek the approbation of men, more by an appearance of piety and devotion, and the duties of the firſt table of the law. That there are ſome ſuch alſo, not only the word of God, but daily experience puts beyond all doubt or queſtion. "This "people," ſaith our Lord, "draweth nigh unto me with "their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips, but their "heart is far from me *." I ſet aſide, both in this and in the former inſtance, the caſe of groſs, intended, and deliberate hypocriſy. But are there not many, who, in their religious duties, ſeem chiefly to have in view the attaining or preſerving the eſteem and approbation of others? They are not determined from any inward and perſonal conviction of the excellence or neceſſity of religion; but from their youth up, they have ſtill heard religion ſpoken of with reverence, and ſeen religious perſons treated with reſpect. This makes them conſider an entire neglect of religious duties as ſhameful rather than ſinful; and ſome degree of profeſſed attachment to them, as neceſſary to their character and credit.

This, like many other motives, has a ſtrong, though at the ſame time an inſenſible influence, and when mixed with imperfect convictions of ſin, will produce no ſmall degree of regularity in religious exerciſes, while yet the heart is habitually ſet upon the world. In whatever age or place there is a regular and ſettled adminiſtration of the ordinances of Chriſt, there will be many whoſe religion is no more than a blind imitation of others, and a deſire of ſome title to that character which is in eſteem and repute for the time being. Wherever there is much real, there will alſo be much counterfeit religion. Wherever there is much true piety, it is always loaded with the dead weight of many cuſtomary profeſſors. Wherever there is much outward eſteem waiting upon the ſervants of God, there will always be many of theſe fair-weather chriſtians, who follow Chriſt whilſt the profeſſion is honorable, but are unacquainted with that part of his ſervice, which conſiſts in taking up the croſs, and ſuffering reproach. Their

* Matt. xv. 8.

character is well deſcribed by our Saviour, under the image of ſeed falling upon ſtony places. "He that received the "ſeed into ſtony places, the ſame is he that heareth the "word, and anon with joy receiveth it. Yet hath he not "root in himſelf, but dureth for a while; for when tribu-"lation or perſecution ariſeth becauſe of the word, by and "by he is offended *."

3. In the third place, there is ſtill another character different from both the former, in which there may be an apparent and imperfect, while there is no compleat and eſſential change. The character I have now in view, is formed upon religious principles, but in which a ſpirit of bondage and ſlaviſh fear greatly predominates. It is often difficult, according to the ſcripture expreſſion, rightly to divide the word of truth: it is difficult to point out the errors by which men deceive themſelves, and miſtake the ſhadow for the ſubſtance, and at the ſame time to caution them ſo diſtinctly, as that ſerious perſons may not be alarmed; their peace and comfort interrupted by unneceſſary or ill-grounded fears. Pearhaps there are few ſubjects in which this difficulty is greater, than the one I have now mentioned. I pray that God, for Chriſt's ſake, may enable me to open the truth in ſuch a manner, as may convince and awaken thoſe who have hitherto built with untempered mortar, and may give additional peace and conſolation to thoſe who have "fled for refuge, to lay hold "of the hope ſet before them."

That it is of importance to open this character, every one may, upon a little reflection be ſenſible. There are many who will not find themſelves included in any of the two former. Upon the moſt candid examination, conſcience bears them witneſs, that they have more in view than merely preſent eaſe and comfort, or the approbation of others. They have often a ſtrong impreſſion of the importance of an endleſs eternity. This hath a ſenſible and conſiderable influence upon their conduct, and is a motive quite diſtinct from worldly pleaſure. It compels them to duties out of the reach of human obſervation, and there-

* Matt. xiii. 20, 21.

fore they cannot think that the praiſe of men is their higheſt aim.

But are there not many ſuch under the dominion of fear? that is to ſay, conſcience in ſome meaſure awakened, denounces vengeance againſt the breaches of the law of God: providential diſpenſations fill them with a terror of divine power; they know they cannot live always, and tremble to think what ſhall become of them after death. Well, perhaps the reader will ſay, with ſome ſurpriſe, is this wrong? No, ſo far their exerciſe coincides with that of real penitents. But here, if I may ſo expreſs it, the ways part aſunder: the real penitent, by a diſcovery of the intrinſic evil of ſin, of the mercy of God, and the great foundation of a ſinner's hope, is led in the way of peace; his heart is truly changed, and brought under the influence of the love of God, whom he obeys as his law-giver; to whom he ſubmits as his Lord; and in whom he reſts as his portion. But there are others, who, by abſtinence from ſome ſins, againſt which the reproofs of conſcience are moſt diſtinct and ſevere, and by the formal diſcharge of many religious duties, endeavor to leſſen their fears; to lay a foundation for a precarious peace; and, as it were, by a coſtly ſacrifice, to purchaſe an immunity from hell. Fear not only awakens, but continues to govern them; they lay down a legal ſyſtem of obedience and ſelf-righteouſneſs, but all the while they drag the yoke with great impatience. They do not hate ſin from their hearts, on its own account, but are afraid that they ſhall burn for ever for committing it. They do not love God, but they fear, becauſe they know that they cannot reſiſt him. They do not engage in his ſervice with chearfulneſs, or delight in it as their choice, but groan under it as a burthen. Their hearts and affections are ſet upon preſent and temporal enjoyments; but they apply themſelves in ſome meaſure to the duties of religion, becauſe they know they cannot keep the world always; and ſubmit to it, as rather better and more tolerable than everlaſting miſery.

The frequency of this character will ſtand in need of little proof. If the features are juſtly drawn, I am perſuaded they will be eaſily known, for they are very com-

mon. Are there not many who may juſtly ſuſpect themſelves to be acted by no higher motive than the fear of wrath? Does not this plainly ſhew itſelf, by your backward, heartleſs, cold diſcharge of duty; your regret and ſorrow in parting with, and frequent relapſes into ſin? Is not your religion temporary and changeable? Does it not riſe and fall with the ſenſible tokens of divine preſence and power? Have you not trembled on a ſick-bed, or other time of danger; humbled yourſelves before God; cried for relief; and promiſed amendment? But has not your reſolution relaxed upon your recovery, and your diligence borne proportion to the ſuppoſed nearneſs or diſtance of the danger? Is not this then manifeſtly the effect of fear: and may not the words of the Pſalmiſt be juſtly applied to all ſuch? "When he ſlew them, then they ſought him; "and they returned, and enquired early after God: and "they remembered that God was their rock, and the high "God their redeemer: nevertheleſs they did flatter him "with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their "tongues; for their heart was not right with him, neither "were they ſtedfaſt in his covenant *."

Few things, I apprehend, will be of more importance than to ſhew, in a clear and ſatisfying manner, that the obedience or religious performances that are influenced by no higher motive than fear, are not acceptable to God, nor any ſufficient evidence of a renewed heart. This, indeed, is equally plain from many paſſages of ſcripture, and from the nature and reaſon of the thing. It appears from all thoſe paſſages formerly cited, and many others where mention is made of the inclination of the heart and will, of which obedience on compulſion can be no manner of proof. It appears undeniably from the great commandment of the law, and ſum of practical religion, "Thou "ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with "all thy ſoul, and with all thy ſtrength, and with all thy "mind †." It appears from what is always repreſented as the great commanding and conſtraining motive of the goſpel: "For the love of Chriſt conſtraineth us, becauſe

* Pſal. lxxviii. 34, 35, 36, 37. † Luke x, 27.

" we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all " dead; and that he died for all, that they which live, " ſhould not henceforth live unto themſelves, but unto him " which died for them, and roſe again *." To the ſame purpoſe the apoſtle John ſays, " We have known and be- " lieved the love that God hath to us. God is love; and " he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in " him †." We find in ſcripture that there is a direct op- poſition ſtated between the ſpirit of genuine converts un- der the goſpel, and a ſpirit of bondage, or ſlaviſh fear; " For ye have not received the ſpirit of bondage again to " fear, but ye have received the ſpirit of adoption, where- " by we cry, Abba, Father ‡." So ſays the ſame apoſtle to Timothy, " For God hath not given us the ſpirit of fear, " but of power and of love, and of a ſound mind ||."

The truth is, it is equally plain from the nature and reaſon of the thing. That which is done only or chiefly from fear, cannot be any evidence of the change that is ac- ceptable to God, becauſe, properly ſpeaking, it is no real or inward change at all. The effects of ſin are reſtrain- ed or controlled by ſuperior power, but the inclination to it remains ſtill the ſame. It is a common and known principle, that whatever is the effect of compulſion or force upon the agent, whether it be good or evil in itſelf, hath nothing moral in its nature. The ſword that commits murder, and that which executes juſtice, deſerves equal blame or praiſe, or rather none of them deſerves either the one or the other. A detected thief, compelled to make re- ſtitution, or loaded with chains ſo that he cannot ſteal, does not thereby become honeſt in his nature.

The caſe is preciſely the ſame with thoſe who, in their religious duties, are under the government of fear, al- though it be the fear of their almighty Judge. From any ſimilar inſtance between man and man, we may at once be ſenſible of this truth. If one man is willing to over- reach another, but, through his adverſary's ſuperior ſkill, is not able, or, terrified by threatenings, is not bold enough

* 2 Cor. v. 14. † 1 John iv. 16. ‡ Rom. viii. 15.

|| 2 Tim. i. 7.

to attempt it, what character does he bear, or deſerve, but that of a diſappointed knave? What parent or maſter will be ſatisfied with the obedience of a child or ſervant, who plainly diſcovers that he hates his commands, and grieves at his authority? It is true, as man can only judge with certainty of the outward appearance, this circumſtance muſt be left out of every ſyſtem of human government. We can make no laws on earth to puniſh the intention: but ſo much we know of it, as may make us ſenſible what all ſuch deſerve, and ſhall receive, at the hand of God, whoſe prerogative it is that he knoweth and judgeth the ſecrets of all hearts.

I ſhall only further obſerve, that the ſame thing appears in the cleareſt manner, from the nature of that happineſs which is prepared for the children of God in the life to come. It is purely ſpiritual, as it is perfectly holy: it conſiſts in the knowledge of God, in the exerciſe of love to him, in conformity to his nature, and the execution of his will. Thoſe who are under the dominion of fear, who have no love to God, but only deſire to avoid his wrath, will certainly find, that, though it were poſſible for them to eſcape hell, they neither deſerve, nor are able to reliſh, the employment and happineſs of heaven. As the commands of God are a burden to them on earth, his immediate preſence would be a ſtill more inſupportable burden in heaven.—From all this I hope it appears evidently, that a character may be formed upon religious principles, and yet, if it is never carried further than a reſtraint by fear, it is not that change which is neceſſary to ſalvation.

It will not be improper, or rather it will be abſolutely neceſſary to make a reflection or two upon this branch of the ſubject for its improvement, and to prevent its being miſtaken or miſapplied. For this purpoſe let it be obſerved, that we muſt careſully diſtinguiſh the ſlaviſh dread above explained, from that dutiful reverential fear which every child of God is ſtill bound to preſerve upon his mind of his Father who is in heaven. Of the firſt kind it is ſaid, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love caſteth out "fear, becauſe fear hath torment: he that feareth is not

"made perfect in love."* In proportion as the love of God prevails, the firſt ſort of fear is baniſhed, but the other is ſo far from being baniſhed, that it rather increaſes. This is no other than a profound veneration of the unſpeakable greatneſs and glory of God, and particularly of his holineſs and purity, which ſhould bring every creature proſtrate before him. We find in the viſion of Iſaiah, the heavenly hoſts repreſented as deeply penetrated with ſuch a diſcovery: "In the year that king Uzziah died, I ſaw the Lord ſitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and his train "filled the temple: above it ſtood the ſeraphims; each "one had ſix wings; with twain he covered his face, "with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did "fly. And one cried unto another and ſaid, HOLY, HOLY, "HOLY, is the Lord of hoſts, the whole earth is full of his "glory."†

This not only may, but ought, in us to be accompanied with a fear of the puniſhment incurred by ſin; at the ſame time it muſt be inſeparably connected with, or rather founded upon a ſenſe of the holineſs of his nature, the purity of his law, and the juſtice of his vengeance. On the contrary, that fear of God which prevails in the unregenerate, is founded only on the terror of his power, as a natural attribute. It is like the ſtruggling of a chained ſlave, who "gnaws his tongue for pain," who is not ſatisfied with the equity of the law, which he has tranſgreſſed, and cannot admit the juſtice of that ſentence, the execution of which he apprehends.

There is no inconſiſtency at all between the fear and love which terminate on the correſpondent attributes of God, majeſty and mercy. A chriſtian may, and ought, to grow in a ſenſe of the divine preſence, and reverential dread of the divine majeſty, and ſo be ſtill more afraid of ſinning; at the ſame time, he may alſo grow in a ſweet calm and compoſure of mind, a fiducial truſt and reliance on the divine faithfulneſs and mercy; juſt as, on the other hand, ſome ſinners evidently increaſe both in preſumption and timidity. During a great part of their lives

* 1 John iv. 18. † Iſaiah vi. 1, 2, 3.

they act without reflection and without reſtraint, and yet, at particular ſeaſons, they are in a manner diſtracted with terror: nay, though it often happens that groſs wickedneſs ſears the conſcience, and produces an inſenſibility and hardneſs of heart, there are inſtances of the greateſt profligates being liable to the moſt alarming fears.* Let us never, therefore, confound things ſo very oppoſite as a fear of the living God, joined to an inward and hearty approbation of his commands, and that unwilling obedience or abſtinence which views him as a ſtern tyrant, and trembles at the thoughts of his wrath.

It will be farther neceſſary to obſerve, that, as a ſlaviſh fear is to be entirely diſtinguiſhed from that which is filial and dutiful, ſo no doubt there is often, even in real chriſtians, a mixture of the ſpirit of bondage itſelf, though they are ſupremely governed by a better principle. This is not to be wondered at, ſince they are ſanctified but in part. There is a ſtrong remainder of ſin and corruption in them in different kinds, and, among the reſt, a very blameable degree of unbelief and diſtruſt. How many are there whoſe comfort is leſſened, and whoſe hands hang down, through an exceſſive fear of death, the laſt enemy? What a refreſhment ſhould it be to all ſuch, to think of this end of our Saviour's coming, to "deliver them who, "through fear of death, were all their life-time ſubject "unto bondage."† For their ſakes, I am perſuaded, it will not be diſagreeable that in the cloſe of this ſection, I lay down a few marks, by which they may be enabled to judge whether this ſlaviſh fear predominates or not.

1ſt then, Chriſtians, whether or not is your fear of wrath immediately connected with a ſenſe of the evil of ſin? Do you ſee theſe two things in their inſeparable relation to, and mutual influence upon one another? Do you fear wrath as the effect of ſin, and ſin as the juſt cauſe of wrath?

* We are told that Nero, one of thoſe monſters called Roman emperors, though he adventured to perpetrate ſome of the moſt horrid crimes, was yet ſo eaſily terrified, that a thunderſtorm uſed to make him hide himſelf under a bed.

† Heb. ii. 15.

Have you no fault to find with this connection? Do you plead guilty before God, and confeſs that you are without excuſe? Is ſin truly hateful in itſelf, and your own unhappy proneneſs to it an habitual burden? The language of a believer is the ſame with that of the apoſtle Paul: "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, "and juſt, and good. Was then that which is good made "death unto me? God forbid. But ſin, that it might "appear ſin, working death in me by that which is good, "that ſin by the commandment might become exceeding "ſinful. For we know that the law is ſpiritual, but I am "carnal, ſold under ſin *." In thoſe who are under the dominion of fear, there is no juſt ſenſe of the evil of ſin, there is a proneneſs to extenuate it, and inclination to juſtify it, and a continual attempt to forget or conceal it. The crime is ſtill ſweet, though the puniſhment is terrible. They are not ſatisfied to find that God is ſo holy, ſo juſt, and ſo powerful. With them his government is arbitrary, his law is ſevere, his nature implacable; and, inſtead of changing their own diſpoſition, they would much rather wiſh a change in his will.

2. Whether does your fear of God drive you from his preſence, or excite a ſtrong deſire of reconciliation and peace? The ſlaviſh fear which is not attended with any juſt views of the divine mercy, clothes God with terror, and makes him the object of averſion. This is plainly the firſt effect of ſin. It was ſo in the caſe of Adam, who, as ſoon as he had loſt his integrity, when he heard God's voice in the garden, fled and hid himſelf. We find the ſame ſentiment expreſſed by the men of Bethſhemeſh, upon an extraordinary token of divine power and jealouſy: "And the men of Bethſhemeſh ſaid, Who is able to ſtand "before this holy Lord God, and to whom ſhall he go up "from us †." Nay, the ſame ſeems to have been the view of the apoſtle Peter, when ſurpriſed with an aſtoniſhing evidence of his maſter's power and Godhead. "When

* Rom. vii. 12, 13, 14. † 1 Sam. vi. 20.

"Simon Peter ſaw it, he fell down at Jeſus' feet, ſaying, "Depart from me, for I am a ſinful man, O Lord."*

This diſpoſition is daily manifeſt in many who are under the dominion of fear. The worſhip of God is painful to them, his ſervice is a burden, his preſence is terrible: they keep at a diſtance, therefore, as much as they can or dare. Their peace and compoſure is chiefly owing to their loſing themſelves, and occupying their minds entirely with different objects. No ſign will more ſurely diſcover the nature and influence of ſlaviſh fear than this. There is a gloom and melancholy ſpread over every thing in religion to them; when they are engaged in ſacred duties, it is a heavy tireſome taſk, and they rejoice in getting them over, as a bullock when he is looſed from the yoke. On the other hand, real chriſtians, though burdened with ſinful fear, cannot take refuge in any thing elſe than God; they dare not take their reſt in the creature, but ſay with Job, "Though he ſlay me, yet will I truſt in him;"† or with the Pſalmiſt David, "Yet the Lord "will command his loving-kindneſs in the day-time, and "in the night his ſong ſhall be with me, and my prayer "unto the God of my life."‡ Nothing gives relief to ſuch, till they attain to a view of the divine mercy, and a humble hope of peace and reconciliation.

3. Whether have you comfort and ſatisfaction in a ſenſe of God's favor, as well as a diſtreſſing fear of his wrath. This alſo will ſerve to diſtinguiſh between thoſe who have no other religion than what fear produces, and thoſe in whom it only maintains a conflict with a better principle. There are ſome who are reſtrained from ſin, and compelled to many duties, by fear, who may eaſily ſee what governs them, becauſe they are altogether ſtrangers to joy and ſatisfaction in God. This is not, indeed, what they aim at. They have never yet ſeen his favor as the object of ſupreme deſire. They only believe ſo far as to tremble, and would fain by compoſition, ſo to ſpeak, and ſome degree of compliance, though reluctant and backward, avoid the divine wrath. A coldneſs and con-

* Luke v. 8. † Job xiii. 15. ‡ Pſal. xlii. 7.

ſtraint runs through all their performances, and they are apt to call in queſtion the reality of joy in God, and communion with him, becauſe they are altogether ſtrangers to it themſelves. But all the real children of God deſire a ſenſe of his love, as well as grieve or fear under a ſenſe of his diſpleaſure. The light of his reconciled countenance gives them more joy and gladneſs than the greateſt affluence of corn or of wine; and under the ſevereſt chaſtiſement, inſtead of flying from his preſence, they ſay with Job, "O that I knew where I might find him, that I "might come even to his ſeat; I would order my cauſe "before him, and fill my mouth with arguments."* Nothing, indeed, can be more proper than calling the one a filial, and the other a ſlaviſh fear: for great is the difference between a child fearing the diſpleaſure of a parent whom he ſincerely loves, and a ſlave dreading the reſentment of an enraged tyrant, whoſe ſervice he abhors.

SECT. IV.

From this metaphor, EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN AGAIN HE CANNOT SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD, *and other parallel expressions in the holy scriptures, we may learn that the change here intended is* SUPERNATURAL.

WHEN I ſay it is a ſupernatural change, I mean that it is what man cannot by his own power effect without ſuperior or divine aid. As we are by nature in a ſtate of enmity and oppoſition to God, ſo this is what we cannot "of ourſelves" remove or overcome. The exerciſe of our own rational powers, the perſuaſion of others, the application of all moral motives of every kind will be ineffectual, without the ſpecial operation of the Spirit and grace of God. Thus the apoſtle John deſcribes thoſe who believe in the name of Chriſt: "Which were born not of "blood, nor of the will of the fleſh, nor of the will of man, "but of God."† And thus the apoſtle Paul expreſſes himſelf: "Not by works of righteouſneſs which we have done,

* Job xxiii. 3, 4. † John i. 13.

" but according to his mercy he ſaved us, by the waſhing of " regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghoſt."* There is no part of the ſcripture doctrine which the natural man hears with greater averſion, or oppoſes with greater violence. It gives ſo humbling a view of our own character and ſtate, and ſtands ſo directly oppoſed to pride and ſelf-ſufficiency, that it cannot be truly acceptable to any, till they are brought to a ſaving acquaintance with its power and efficacy. However it hath been, this " fool- " iſhneſs of preaching," or rather, this commonly eſteemed fooliſh part of preaching, that God hath moſt remarkably bleſſed for the ſalvation of ſouls; I will therefore endeavor to ſhew, in as plain and ſatisfying a manner as I am able, that this is the doctrine of the holy ſcripture; and then to vindicate it from the chief objections that are uſually raiſed againſt it.

How many paſſages of Scripture are there, that ſpeak in the ſtrongeſt terms, not only of our miſerable but helpleſs ſtate before converſion. Thus the apoſtle to the Epheſians, " And you hath he quickened, who were dead in " treſpaſſes and ſins."† And again, " But God, who is " rich in mercy, for his great love where with he loved us, " even when we were dead in ſins, hath quickened us to- " gether with Chriſt (by grace ye are ſaved.")‡ In his epiſtle to the Coloſſians, he repeats the ſame thing; " And " you, being dead in your ſins and the uncircumciſion of " your fleſh, hath he quickened together with him, hav- " ing forgiven you all your treſpaſſes."‖ The reader muſt " know, that in many other paſſages the ſame truth is to be found, couched under the ſame or like metaphors; ſuch as " blindneſs, darkneſs, hardneſs of heart." The force of the expreſſion is ſeldom ſufficiently attended to. Suffer me then to put the queſtion, Do you give credit to the holy ſcriptures? Do you form your opinions without partiality or prejudice from them? Then you muſt receive it as truth that man, in his natural ſtate, can do nothing of himſelf to his own recovery, without the concurrence of ſuperior aid. If there is any meaning or propriety in ſcrip-

* Titus iii. 5. † Eph. ii. 1. ‡ Eph. ii. 4, 5. ‖ Col. ii. 13.

ture language, we muſt yield to this. What more could be ſaid, than that we are "dead" in ſin? What more incapable of action, than one who is entirely deprived of life?

But leſt there ſhould be any remaining exception, the thing is aſſerted in plain and explicit terms, without any metaphor, by the apoſtle John, from our Saviour's own mouth: "No man can come unto me, except the Father "which hath ſent me, draw him; and I will raiſe him "up at the laſt day. It is written in the prophets, And "they ſhall be all taught of God; every man, therefore, "that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh "unto me."* I ſhall mention only one paſſage more, in which, under the ſimilitude of a wretched outcaſt infant, the prophet Ezekiel repreſents the natural ſtate of Jeruſalem. "And as for thy nativity, in the day thou waſt born, thy "navel was not cut, neither waſt thou waſhed in water to "ſupple thee; thou waſt not ſalted at all, nor ſwaddled at "all. None eye pitied thee, to do any of theſe unto thee, "to have compaſſion upon thee; but thou waſt caſt out in "the open field, to the loathing of thy perſon, in the day "that thou waſt born. And when I paſſed by thee, and "ſaw thee polluted in thine own blood, I ſaid unto thee, "when thou waſt in thy blood, Live; yea, I ſaid unto "thee, when thou waſt in thy blood, Live."† Here all "the circumſtances are collected, that could ſignify at once a miſerable and weak, wretched and helpleſs condition, or that could ſerve to make our deliverance at once a ſigna, inſtance both of grace and power.

This leads me to obſerve, that the ſame truth will receive further light from theſe paſſages of ſcripture, in which the real agent in this great change is pointed out, and which celebrate the efficacy of his power. As in the text it is aſſerted, that, "except a man be born again, he can-"not enter into the kingdom of God." So in other paſſages, "true believers are ſaid to be "born of God—born from "above—born of the Spirit." The power of God exerted in the renovation of the ſinner, is deſcribed in language taken

* John vi. 44, 45. † Ezek. xvi. 4, 5, 6.

from the firſt formation of the world. "For we are his "workmanſhip, created in Chriſt Jeſus unto good works, "which God hath before ordained that we ſhould walk in "them."* And, "If any man be in Chriſt, he is a new "creature; old things are paſt away, behold all things are "become new."† See the prophecies of the Old Teſtament, reſpecting the plentiful effuſion of the holy Spirit in the times of the goſpel: they contain a clear deſcription of divine ſupernatural influence. Thus the prophet Iſaiah, "For I will pour water upon him that is thirſty, and "floods upon the dry ground. I will pour my Spirit up- "on thy ſeed, and my bleſſing upon thine offspring; and "they ſhall ſpring up as among the graſs, and as willows "by the water-courſes."‡ To the ſame purpoſe the prophet Ezekiel: "Then will I ſprinkle clean water upon "you, and ye ſhall be clean from all your filthineſs, and "from all your idols will I cleanſe you. A new heart alſo "will I give you, and a new ſpirit will I put within; and "I will take away the ſtony heart out of your fleſh, and I "will give you an heart of fleſh; and I will put my ſpirit "within you, and cauſe you to walk in my ſtatutes; and "ye ſhall keep my judgments, and do them."‖ Let it not ſeem tedious to any that I have collected ſo many paſſages of ſcripture on this ſubject. It is no light thing; and indeed, it is no common thing to believe it from the heart. But let us now affirm it, on divine teſtimony, that regeneration is the work of the Holy Ghoſt.

I would not build this truth upon any other evidence. When we ſtand in God's room, bear his meſſage, and ſpeak in his name, nothing ſhould be affirmed, which cannot be ſupported by a "Thus ſaith the Lord." But having done ſo, I think I may warrantably obſerve how much the viſible ſtate of the world correſponds with the ſcripture declarations on this ſubject. I hope this will be neither unſuitable nor unprofitable, conſidering what an inward averſion men have to receive and apply them. Do we not daily ſee many inſtances of perſons, of firſt

* Eph. ii. 10. † 2 Cor. v. 17. ‡ Iſ. xliv. 3, 4.
‖ Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26, 27.

rate underſtandings and great natural abilities, who yet continue blind to their duty to God, and the ſalvation of their ſouls? As they are born, ſo they continue to ſhow themſelves through their whole lives, "wiſe to do evil, "but to do good they have no knowledge." What proofs do they often give of the power and influence of habits of wickedneſs over them? How frequently does it happen, that their attachment to ſin in general, or to ſome particular ſin, is ſuch, as to bear down before it all regard to their own intereſt, temporal and eternal? While at the ſame time perſons of unſpeakably inferior talents, enlightened by the Spirit, and ſanctified by the grace of God, ſhall ſtand firm againſt the moſt dangerous temptations, and eſcape the pollution that is in the world through luſt. This our bleſſed Lord adores as a part or proof of the ſovereignty and unſearchable wiſdom of his heavenly Father. "In that hour Jeſus rejoiced in ſpirit, and ſaid, I "thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that "thou haſt hid theſe things from the wiſe and prudent, "and haſt revealed them unto babes: even ſo, Father, "for ſo it ſeemed good in thy ſight."*

Is it not plain, that ſuperior advantages of inſtruction, though very valuable, are far from being always effectual? Sometimes thoſe who live long under the ſalutary inſtruction and edifying example of pious parents and maſters, continue, notwithſtanding, in an inſenſible ſtate. Sometimes we ſee perſons ſit long under the moſt enlightening and awakening miniſtry, with hearts as hard as the nether millſtone. The caſe of the ordinary hearers of the goſpel is indeed often affecting, and leads to ſerious meditation on the depths of the divine counſels. Suffer me to beſpeak the readers of this claſs in the following terms. Are not many of you a wonder to yourſelves, as well as to one another? Is not your danger often pointed out to you in the cleareſt manner? Is not your character drawn and diſtinguiſhed by the moſt undeniable marks? Are not your duty and intereſt ſet before you in ſuch a manner, that it cannot be contradicted, and there is no-

* Luke x. 21.

thing left to reply ? And yet after all, though there may be ſome weak or temporary reſolutions, it is without any real or laſting effect. Doth not this ratify and confirm the following paſſage of ſcripture ? " Who then is Paul, and " who is Apollos, but miniſters by whom ye believed, " even as the Lord gave to every man ? I have planted, " Apollos watered, but God gave the increaſe. So then, " neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that wa- " tereth, but God that giveth the increaſe."*

To be abſent altogether from the ordinances of God is a dreadful and dangerous thing, for it leads directly to a ſtate of total blindneſs and undiſturbed ſecurity. I have often thought, however, that the caſe of many who continue to give their attendance is much more wonderful. Are there not habitual drunkards often ſeen in the houſe of God ? Are there not ſome prophane ſwearers often ſeen in the houſe of God ? Are there not ſome who walk in the luſt of uncleanneſs ? ſome who retain, without reſtitution, unrighteous gain, whom approaching death, the wrath of God, and the fire of hell cannot terrify ? Of ſuch, we may juſtly ſay with the apoſtle Paul, " But if our goſpel be hid, it " is hid to them that are loſt, in whom the god of this " world hath blinded the minds of them which believe " not, leſt the light of the glorious goſpel of Chriſt, who is " the image of God, ſhould ſhine unto them."†

Let it be further conſidered, how much providential warnings are generally deſpiſed, even when they are ſo awful in their nature, and ſo clear in their meaning, that one would think nothing but an abſolute infatuation could prevent their effect. Sinners may keep themſelves from hearing the word of God, and from any ſuch reading or converſation as will bring eternity in their view. But he viſits them in their families or in their perſons, and they cannot fly from theſe terrible things in righteouſneſs, by which he pleads his cauſe from day to day. Are not the young and beautiful ſoon carried to their graves ? Are not the great and noble ſoon humbled in the duſt ? Have not ſenſuality and riot, impurity and luſt, ſlain their victims,

* 1 Cor. iii. 5, 6, 7. † 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

and raiſed up monuments fraught with moral inſtruction in every age? How long is it ago, ſince Solomon ſaid, "Whoredom and wine, and new wine, take away the "heart?" And of a harlot, "She hath caſt down many wounded, and many ſtrong men have been ſlain by her. "Her houſe is the way to hell, going down to the chambers "of death."* But though uninſpired writers have ſaid this as well as he, nay, though it is viſible to all, have men become wiſe? Have they ſhunned the paths of the deſtroyer? No: we may juſtly ſay of the preſent times, as the Pſalmiſt David ſaid many ages ago, "This their way is their folly; yet their poſterity approve their ſayings,"†. Nothing, nothing will change them, till the Spirit of God rouſe and awaken the conſcience, powerfully conſtrain the will, and effectually renew the heart.

Hence then it appears, that the new birth is a "ſupernatural change;" it is the effect of the power of God; it is the work of the Holy Ghoſt. I have been at the more pains to eſtabliſh this truth, becauſe I am perſuaded, that until it be truly received, there may be a form, but there can be nothing of the power of godlineſs. But we muſt now vindicate it from the objections and abuſe, to which it may be thought liable. There are many who ſtill harbor in their minds, and ſometimes produce in converſation, the objection mentioned by the apoſtle Paul; "Thou wilt ſay then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath re-"ſiſted his will?"‡ This, indeed, is the ſum of all the objections that ever were, or ever can be offered againſt it: and I make the ſhort anſwer of the ſame apoſtle; "Nay, but O man! who art thou that replieſt againſt God?" This is but making or imagining an inconſiſtency between two things, both of which God hath clearly eſtabliſhed and inſeparably joined in his word. Theſe are, his own power neceſſary to the change, and our duty in the uſe of the means; or rather, our ſin while continuing at enmity with him, and refuſing his mercy.

I make no ſcruple to acknowledge, that it is impoſſible for me; nay, I find no difficulty in ſuppoſing, that it is

* Prov. vii. 26, 27. † Pſ. xlix. 13. ‡ Rom. ix. 19.

impoſſible for any finite mind to point out the bounds between the "dependence" and "activity" of the creature. But though we muſt ever remember, that it is he alone who can "bring a clean thing out of an unclean," yet we know alſo, that "all have ſinned and come ſhort of the glo-" ry of God." We know that "God will be juſt when he "ſpeaketh, and clear when he judgeth:" that he rejects with diſdain, the imputation of being the author of ſin. "Let no man ſay, when he is tempted, I am tempted of "God: for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempt-"eth he any man." * For our greater aſſurance of this, he hath condeſcended to confirm it by his oath. "As I "live, ſaith the Lord God, I have no pleaſure in the death "of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way "and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for "why will ye die, O houſe of Iſrael?"† The connexion between this and the former truth appears plainly in the following paſſage: "Ye will not come unto me, that ye "might have life."‡

Perhaps alſo, there are ſome who abuſe this doctrine to ſloth and negligence. At leaſt they may pretend this, as an excuſe or palliation of their contempt of religion. But is it not an inference directly contrary to what the ſcripture teaches us much more juſtly to draw from the ſame truth, viz. "Work out your own ſalvation with fear and "trembling; for it is God that worketh in you to will and "to do of his good pleaſure."‖ The former inference would be juſt in the caſe of devils, who, having received their ſentence, can only now "believe and tremble:" but it would be altogether unjuſt, and a dreadful contempt of mercy in thoſe, to whom the offer of ſalvation by grace is addreſſed. What is now tranſacting in the miniſtry of the goſpel, ſhall contribute at laſt to ſtop every mouth, and put this criminal excuſe to eternal ſilence. Suppoſe the ſinner at the judgment-ſeat to offer this defence for himſelf: "I was altogether under the power of corruption; "it was impoſſible for me to do any thing of myſelf." Is

* James i. 13. † Ezek. xxxiii. 11. ‡ John v. 40.

‖ Phil. ii. 13, 14.

it not natural to reply, "Where learned you this?" From the holy ſcriptures. "And did not the ſame ſcriptures "alſo tell you, Him that cometh to me, I will in no wiſe "caſt out. Wherefore he is able to ſave to the uttermoſt "all that come to God through him.—Believe in the Lord "Jeſus Chriſt, and thou ſhalt be ſaved." But I could not reconcile one ſcripture to another. "And was that any "way wonderful? Or can it poſſibly juſtify your rebel-"lion againſt the plaineſt commands, that you was not able "fully to comprehend what is ſaid of the abſolute dominion "and ſovereignty of God?"

Let us therefore ſettle it in our minds, that, though we are of ourſelves utterly unable to produce a change in our hearts, "nothing is impoſſible with GOD." He firſt made them, and he is able to reform them. On a conviction of our own inability, one would think we ſhould but the more humbly and the more earneſtly apply to him who is all-ſufficient in power and grace. The deplorable, and naturally helpleſs ſtate of ſinners, doth not hinder exhortations to them in ſcripture; and therefore, takes not away their obligation to duty. See an addreſs, where the ſtrongeſt metaphors are retained, the exhortation given in theſe very terms, and the foundation of the duty plainly pointed out. "Wherefore he ſaith, awake thou that ſleepeſt, "and ariſe from the dead, and Chriſt ſhall give thee "light."* From which it is very plain, that the moral inability, under which ſinners now lie, as a conſequence of the fall, is not of ſuch a nature, as to take away the guilt of ſin, the propriety of exhortations to duty, or the neceſſity of endeavors after recovery.

But what ſhall we ſay? Alas! the very ſubject we are now ſpeaking of, affords a new proof of the blindneſs, prejudice, and obſtinacy of ſinners. They are ſelf-condemned; for they do not act the ſame part in ſimilar caſes. The affairs of the preſent life are not managed in ſo preposterous a manner. He that ploughs his ground, and throws in his ſeed, cannot ſo much as unite one grain to the clod; nay, he is not able to conceive how it is done.

* Eph. v. 14.

He cannot carry on, nay, he cannot ſo much as begin one ſingle ſtep of this wonderful proceſs toward the ſubſequent crop; the mortification of the ſeed, the reſurrection of the blade, and gradual increaſe, till it come to perfect maturity. Is it, therefore, reaſonable that he ſhould ſay, I for my part can do nothing. It is, firſt and laſt, an effect of divine power and energy. And God can as eaſily raiſe a crop without ſowing as with it, in a ſingle inſtant, and in any place, as in a long time, by the mutual influence of ſoil and ſeaſon; I will therefore ſpare myſelf the hardſhip of toil and labor, and wait with patience, till I ſee what he will be pleaſed to ſend. Would this be madneſs? Would it be univerſally reputed ſo? And would it not be equal madneſs to turn the grace of God into licentiouſneſs? Believe it, the warning is equally reaſonable and equally neceſſary, in ſpiritual as in temporal things: "Be "not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatſoever a man "ſoweth, that ſhall he alſo reap: for he that ſoweth to the "fleſh, ſhall of the fleſh reap corruption; but he that "ſoweth to the Spirit, ſhall of the Spirit reap life everlaſting."*

* Gal. vi. 7. 8.

CHAP. II.

In which is shewn wherein this change doth properly and directly consist, and what are its principal evidences and fruits.

SECT. I.

Wherein the change in regeneration doth properly and directly consist.

I HAVE hitherto, by general remarks, endeavored to caution the reader againſt taking up with erroneous and defective views of the nature of religion. We now proceed a ſtep farther: and I would willingly point out, in as diſtinct a manner as I am able, what is the change which is wrought in all, without exception, who are the real children of God, by whatever means it is brought about; what it is in the temper and diſpoſition, in the life and practice, which conſtitutes the difference between one who "is," and one who is "not born again." The different ſteps by which this change may be effected in the ſovereign providence of God, and the different degrees of perfection at which it may arrive, I purpoſely omit here, and reſerve as the ſubject of a diſtinct head of diſcourſe.

That we may enter on the ſubject with the greater perſpicuity and ſimplicity, it will be proper to begin with obſerving, that the deſign and purpoſe of this change is to repair the loſs which man ſuſtained by the fall. Man, at his firſt creation, was made after the image of God in knowledge, righteouſneſs, and holineſs, and enjoyed uninterrupted fellowſhip and communion with him. He was not only ſubſervient to the divine glory, by a natural and neceſſary ſubjection to the divine dominion, which all creatures are, have been, and ever will be, but by choice and inclination, his duty and delight being invariably the ſame. By the fall he became not only obnoxious to the divine diſpleaſure, by a ſingle act of tranſgreſſion, but diſobedient to the divine will in his habitual and prevailing inclination. This is the character given not of one man

only, but of the human race. "And God ſaw that the "wickedneſs of man was great in the earth, and that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only "evil continually."*

He became, at the ſame time, not only unworthy of, but wholly diſinclined to communion with God, and habitually prefers the creature before the Creator, who is "God bleſſed for evermore." In regeneration, therefore, the ſinner muſt be reſtored to the image of God, which, in a created nature, is but another expreſſion for obedience to his will. He muſt alſo be reſtored to the exerciſe of love to him, and find his happineſs and comfort in him. His habitual temper, his prevailing diſpoſition, or that which hath the aſcendancy, muſt be the ſame that was perfect and without mixture, before the fall, and ſhall be made equally, or perhaps more perfect in heaven after death.

As the change muſt be entire and univerſal, correſponding to the corruption of the whole man, it is not unuſual to ſay, it may be fully comprehended in the three following things, giving a new direction to the underſtanding, the will, and the affections. And no doubt, with reſpect to every one of theſe, there is a remarkable and ſenſible change. But as the underſtanding is a natural faculty, which becomes good or evil, juſt as it is applied or employed, it would be ſcarce poſſible to illuſtrate the change in it without introducing, at the ſame time, a view of the diſpoſition and tendency of the heart and affections. As, therefore, the change is properly of a moral or ſpiritual nature, it ſeems to me properly and directly to conſiſt in theſe two things, 1. That our ſupreme and chief end be to ſerve and glorify God, and that every other aim be ſubordinate to this. 2. That the ſoul reſt in God as its chief happineſs, and habitually prefer his favor to every other enjoyment. Theſe two particulars I ſhall now endeavor to illuſtrate a little, in the order in which I have named them.

* Gen. vi. 5.

1. Our ſupreme and chief end muſt be to ſerve and glorify God, and every other aim muſt be ſubordinate to this. All things were originally made, and are daily preſerved for, nay, they ſhall certainly in the iſſue tend to the glory of God; that is, the exerciſe and illuſtration of divine perfection. With this great end of creation the inclination and will of every intelligent creature ought to coincide. It is, according to ſcripture and reaſon, the firſt duty of man to "give unto the Lord the glory due "unto his name." This, I know, the world that lieth in wickedneſs can neither underſtand nor approve. "The "natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of "God, for they are fooliſhneſs unto him, neither can he "know them, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned."* The truth is, we ought not to be ſurprized to find it ſo, for in this the ſin of man originally conſiſted, and in this the nature of all ſin, as ſuch, doth ſtill conſiſt, viz. withdrawing the allegiance due to God, and refuſing ſubjection to his will. The language of every unrenewed heart, and the language of every ſinner's practice is, "Our lips are "our own, who is lord over us?" But he that is renewed and born again, hath ſeen his own entire dependance upon God, hath ſeen his Maker's right of dominion, and the obligation upon all his creatures to be, in every reſpect, ſubſervient to his glory, and without reſerve ſubmiſſive to his will. He hath ſeen this to be moſt "fit" and "rea-"ſonable," becauſe of the abſolute perfection and infinite excellence of the divine nature. He is convinced that all preferring of our will to that of God, is a criminal uſurpation by the creature of the unalienable rights of the great Creator and ſovereign proprietor of all.

Regeneration, then, is communicating this new principle, and giving it ſuch force as it may obtain and preſerve the aſcendancy, and habitually govern the will. Every one may eaſily ſee the different operation and effects of this principle and its oppoſite, by the different carriage and behavior of men in the world. The unrenewed man ſeeks his own happineſs immediately and ul-

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

timately: it is to pleaſe himſelf that he conſtantly aims. This is the cauſe, the uniform cauſe of his preferring one action to another. This determines his choice of employment, enjoyments, companions. His religious actions are not choſen, but ſubmitted to, through fear of worſe. He conſiders religion as a reſtraint, and the divine law as hard and ſevere. So that a ſhort and ſummary deſcription may be given of man in his natural ſtate. That he hath forgotten his ſubjection, that God is dethroned, and ſelf-honored, loved, and ſerved in his room.

This account will appear to be juſt, from every view given us in ſcripture of our ſtate and character, before or after converſion. It appears very clearly, from the firſt condition required by our Savior of his diſciples, viz. ſelf-denial. "Then ſaid Jeſus to his diſciples, If any man "will come after me, let him deny himſelf, and take up "his croſs, and follow me."* All thoſe who are brought back to a ſenſe of their duty and obligation as creatures, are ready to ſay, not with their tongues only, but with their hearts, "Thou art worthy to receive glory and honor, "and power, for thou has created all things, and for thy "pleaſure they are and were created."† It ought to be attended to what is the import of this, when ſpoken from conviction. They not only conſider God as being moſt great, and therefore to be feared, but as infinitely holy, as abſolutely perfect, and therefore to be loved and ſerved. They eſteem all his commands concerning all things to be right. Their own remaining corruption is known, felt, and confeſſed to be wrong. This law in their members, warring againſt the law of God in their minds, is often deeply lamented, and, by the grace of God, ſtrenuouſly and habitually reſiſted.

Perhaps the attentive reader may have obſerved, that I have ſtill kept out of view our own great intereſt in the ſervice of God. The reaſon is, there is certainly, in every renewed heart, a ſenſe of duty, independant of intereſt. Were this not the caſe, even ſuppoſing a deſire of reward, or fear of puniſhment, ſhould diſpoſe to obedience, it

* Matt. xvi. 24. † Rev. iv. 11.

would plainly be only a change of life, and no change of heart. At the ſame time, as it did not ariſe from any inward principle, it would neither be uniform nor laſting. It is beyond all queſtion, indeed, that our true intereſt is inſeparable from our duty, ſo that ſelf-ſeeking is ſelf-loſing; but ſtill a ſenſe of duty muſt have the precedency, otherwiſe it changes its nature, and is, properly ſpeaking, no duty at all.

To honor God in the heart, then, and to ſerve him in the life, is the firſt and higheſt deſire of him that is born again. This is not, and cannot be the caſe, with any in a natural ſtate. But, before we proceed to the other particular implied in this change, it will not be improper to make an obſervation, which I hope will have the greater weight, when the foundation of it is freſh in the reader's mind. Hence may be plainly ſeen the reaſon why prophane and worldly men have ſuch a tendency to ſelf-righteouſneſs, while the truly pious are filled with an abhorrence that ſoul-deſtroying falſhood. This, I dare ſay, appears ſtrange to many, as I confeſs it hath often done to me, before I had thought fully upon the ſubject: that thoſe who evidently are none of the ſtricteſt in point of morals, and have leaſt of that kind to boaſt of, ſhould yet be the moſt profeſſed admirers and defenders of the doctrine of juſtification by works, and deſpiſers of the doctrine of the grace of God. But the ſolution is eaſy and natural. Worldly men have no juſt ſenſe of their natural and unalienable obligation to glorify God in their thoughts, words, and actions, and therefore all that they do in religion, they look upon as a meritorious ſervice, and think that certainly ſomething is due to them on that account. They think it ſtrange if they have walked ſoberly, regularly, and decently, eſpecially if they have been ſtrict and punctual in the forms of divine worſhip, that God ſhould not be obliged (pardon the expreſſion) to reward them according to their works. It is a hard ſervice to them, they do it only that they may be rewarded, or at leaſt may not ſuffer for the neglect of it, and therefore cannot but inſiſt upon the merit of it.

On the other hand, thoſe who are born of God, are ſenſible that it is the duty of every rational creature to love God with all his heart, and to conſecrate all his powers and faculties to his Maker's ſervice. They are convinced that, whoever ſhould do ſo without ſin, would do only what is juſt and equal, and have no plea of merit to advance. But when they conſider how many ſins ſtill cleave to them, how far ſhort they come of their duty in every inſtance, they aſk for mercy, and not for reward, and are ready to ſay with the Pſalmiſt David, "If thou, Lord, "ſhould mark iniquities, O Lord, who ſhall ſtand: but "there is forgiveneſs with thee, that thou mayeſt be feared."* To ſum up this reaſoning in a few words. The reluctant obedience which ſome pay to the divine law, is conſidered as a debt charged upon God; whereas real obedience is conſidered as a debt due to God. And therefore it muſt always hold, that the very imperfection of an obedience itſelf increaſes our diſpoſition to overvalue and reſt our dependance upon it.

SECT. II.

The ſecond part of this change.

THE next thing implied in a ſaving change is, that the ſoul reſts in God as its chief happineſs, and habitually prefers his favor to every other enjoyment. On this branch of the ſubject I would beg the reader to obſerve, not only the meaning and ſubſtance of the propoſition, but the order in which it is placed. There muſt be firſt a devotedneſs of mind to God, and a ſupreme leading concern for his honor and glory. He muſt be, if I may ſo ſpeak, again reſtored to his original right, his dominion and throne, while the creature is reduced to its obedience and ſubjection. In conſequence of this, there is an unfeigned acquieſcence in God, as the ſource of comfort, and a high eſteem of his favor as better than life. This does not go before, nay, is hardly diſtinct or ſeparated

* Pſal. cxxx. 3, 4.

from, a ſenſe of duty, but is founded upon it, and grows out of it. When a holy ſoul has ſeen the infinite excellence and glory of the true God, loves him ſupremely, and is devoted to him entirely, he alſo delights in him ſuperlatively.

Such a perſon is fully convinced that thoſe, and thoſe alone are happy, whoſe God is the Lord, and that thoſe who are afar off from him ſhall certainly periſh. In a natural ſtate, as the ſure conſequence of ſin, the tranſgreſſor flies from God, with a dread and horror of his preſence. But the renewed ſoul returns to him with deſire, and feels an uneaſineſs and want that cannot be ſupplied but by the intimation of pardon, and ſenſe of divine love. The warmth and fervor of devout affection is expreſſed in the ſtrongeſt terms in ſcripture: "As the hart panteth after the water-"brooks, ſo panteth my ſoul after thee, O God. My ſoul "thirſteth for God, for the living God, when ſhall I come "and appear before God.* Becauſe thy loving-kindneſs "is better than life, my lips ſhall praiſe thee. Thus will "I bleſs thee while I live, I will lift up my hands in thy "name, my ſoul ſhall be ſatisfied as with marrow and "fatneſs, and my mouth ſhall praiſe thee with joyful "lips."†

It is neceſſary that ſerving and delighting in God ſhould be joined together on a double account. Their influence on one another is reciprocal. It is not eaſy to diſtinguiſh a conſcientious ſtudy to ſerve and glorify God, from a ſlaviſh obedience through fear of divine power, but by its being inſeparably connected with a delight in God, as the choice of the heart, and centre of the affections. On the other hand, it is hard to diſtinguiſh cleaving to God as our portion and happineſs, from an intereſted mercenary bargain in religion, but by its being preceded by, founded upon, nay, even reſolved into, a ſenſe of the ſupreme honor due to God for his infinite excellence. This reaſonable ſervice will then be attended with an unſpeakable ſweetneſs and complacency, and the all-ſufficiency of God will be an unſhaken ſecurity for the happineſs and peace of thoſe who put their truſt in him.

* Pſal. xlii. 1, 2. † Pſal. lxiii. 3, 4, 5.

We may often obſerve theſe two diſpoſitions jointly exerting themſelves, and mutually ſtrengthening one another, in the langnage and exerciſes of the ſaints in ſcripture. With what fervor of ſpirit, and with what inimitable force and beauty of ſtyle, do we find the Pſalmiſt David expreſſing himſelf in both views. Sometimes he makes a full ſurrender of himſelf and his all to the divine ſervice and diſpoſal; at other times his ſoul "makes her "boaſt in God," and he exults in his happineſs and ſeurity under the divine protection: "O my ſoul, thou haſt "ſaid unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord*.—The Lord is "the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup, thou "maintaineſt my lot: the lines are fallen to me in pleaſant "places, yea, I have a goodly heritage†."

Theſe two things are, indeed, often ſo intimately united that we are at a loſs to know whether we ſhould interpret the language of the ſacred writers as a profeſſion of duty, or an expreſſion of delight, as in the following words; "I will ſing unto the Lord as long as I live, I will ſing "praiſe unto my God while I have my being.—My me-"ditation of him ſhall be ſweet, I will be glad in the Lord‡." How deeply the Pſalmiſt was penetrated with a ſenſe of the honor and ſervice due to God, may be particularly ſeen in ſome of thoſe animated paſſages in which his enlarged heart calls upon every creature to join in the work of praiſe: "Bleſs the Lord ye his angels, that excel in "ſtrength, that do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word. Bleſs ye the Lord all ye his hoſts, ye "miniſters of his that do his pleaſure. Bleſs the Lord all "his works, in all places of his dominion. Bleſs the "Lord, O my ſoul."‖

It is eaſy to ſee how this diſtinguiſhes the natural from the new-born ſoul; nay, it is eaſy to ſee how this diſtinguiſhes the man who is renewed in the ſpirit of his mind, from all others, however various their characters, however different or oppoſite their purſuits. The deſign of man's creation is expreſſed in the Aſſembly's Shorter Catechiſm, in a way

* Pſal. xvi. 2. † Pſal. xvi. 5, 6. ‡ Pſal. civ. 33, 34.
‖ Pſal. ciii. 20, 21, 22.

that can ſcarce be altered for the better; it was, that he might glorify God, and enjoy him for ever." As he departed from his duty by ſin, ſo alſo, at the ſame time, from his happineſs. As he refuſed to do the will of God, ſo he no more ſought his favor, but placed his happineſs and comfort in the creature "more than the Creator, who is "God bleſſed for ever." All unrenewed perſons, in one ſhape or another, place their ſupreme happineſs in ſomething that is not God. In this one circumſtance they all agree, though the different forms which the world puts on to ſolicit their affection, the different degrees in which they proſecute it, and the different ways in which they apply or abuſe it, are ſo very many, that it is impoſſible to enumerate or deſcribe them. Though there is but one God, the idols of the nations are innumerable. There is but one way to peace, and if that is neglected, the unſatisfactory nature of all created enjoyments makes men fly from one earthly comfort to another, till they feel, by late experience, the vanity of them all. Their ſtate is juſtly deſcribed by the wiſe man, when he ſays, "Lo this only have "I found, that God made man upright, but they have "ſought out many inventions."*

It may not be improper here, juſt to hint at a few of the principal purſuits by which the characters of men are diverſified, their hearts and cares divided, and the one thing needful forgotten and diſregarded. Some there are who yield themſelves up to the unreſtrained indulgence of pleaſure. Senſual appetite and paſſion carry them on with unbridled fury. The luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eye, and the pride of life, poſſeſs their affections, and their prevailing deſire is to gratify theſe appetites, as far as their ſituation and circumſtances enable them, or the rival purſuits of others will permit them. This, which is uſually the firſt attempt of unſanctified and ungoverned youth, is well deſcribed by the wiſe man, in the following ſtrong caution againſt it: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy "youth, and let thine heart cheer thee in the days of thy "youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the

* Eccleſ. vii. 29.

"ſight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all theſe "things, God will bring thee into judgment."* This is the path of the abandoned and heaven-daring profligate, who caſts off all fear of God, who burſts aſunder every bond, "who draws iniquity with cords of vanity, and ſins "as it were with a cart-rope."

Again, There are ſome whoſe hearts are ſet upon preſent gain. Inſtead of making that ſober and moderate uſe of this world and its enjoyments, which becometh mortal creatures, they look upon it as their home. Inſtead of conſidering it only as a mean to a higher end, they have it as their chief or principal view, to ſecure or enlarge their poſſeſſion of it. Theſe "ſay to the gold, Thou "art my refuge, and to the fine gold, Thou art my confi-"dence."—They think their "houſes will endure for "ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations." This is often the ſin of riper years: and, that the brutiſh folly of ſinners may more eminently ſhow itſelf, it is often the reproach and ſcandal of old age, when its abſurdity is moſt ſenſible and apparent. What doth it ſignify how much men of this character deſpiſe the levity of youth, or hate the filthy receptacles of ſenſuality and luſt, while their affections are ſupremely ſet upon the preſent world, while "they bleſs the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth?"

It is often ſufficient to raiſe in every ſerious perſon a mixture of compaſſion and indignation, to hear thoſe with whom poverty is the only crime, openly pleading for, and boaſting of their attachment to the world, or treating with a ſmile of contempt thoſe who tell them, from the word of God, that it is vain. Though nothing is more frequently confirmed by experience, it is uſual to conſider this as only pulpit declamation, a part of our buſineſs and profeſſion, but containing a maxim that cannot be applied to common life. Let all ſuch be informed, whether they will hear it or not, that, however regular and abſtemious they may be as to all ſenſual indulgence, however diligent, eager, and ſucceſsful in trade, "except they be born again, "they cannot ſee the kingdom of God." And, that they

* Eccles. xi. 9.

may not deceive themſelves, but know in part at leaſt, wherein this change conſiſteth, let them peruſe and ponder the following paſſage of the apoſtle John: "Love not the "world, neither the things that are in the world: if any "man love the world, the love of the Father is not in "him."*

Once more. There are ſome who walk in the path of ambition. Pride and vain glory is the idol at whoſe ſhrine they bow. Theſe, indeed, may be divided into very different claſſes. Pride, which may be called the maſter-paſſion of the human frame, takes in the moſt extenſive and univerſal range. There is ſcarce any ſtate in which it is not able to exert itſelf, ſcarce any circumſtance which it is not able to convert into the means of its own gratification. All natural advantages which men enjoy over others, whether in reſpect of body or mind; all the additional trappings of ſociety, viz. wealth, ſtation, and office; all acquired advantages, intellectual, or even moral, become the fuel of pride. As ſome endeavor by extraordinary actions to ſpread their fame in public life, others, though in a narrower ſphere, are under the habitual government of the ſame deſire. While great men are taking cities, and deſtroying kingdoms, to get themſelves a name, others of meaner rank are vying with one another in dreſs, furniture, and equipage, or ſuch inferior arts as they have been able to attain. Nay, thoſe who never did any thing that could merit praiſe, too often ſhew themſelves under the government of the moſt hateful and deteſted kind of ambition, by a rancorous malice and envy againſt ſuch as excel or outſhine them. We may go a ſtep farther, and ſay, there is great reaſon to believe, that in ſome the cultivation of their minds, long and aſſiduous application to ſtudy, zealous and ſucceſsful endeavors to promote the public good, ought to be aſcribed to no other ſource, to no higher motive.

I thought I could not fall upon any way to illuſtrate this part of my ſubject, which would make it more intelligible, than to give this ſhort view of the characters and purſuits

* 1 John ii. 15.

of the men of the world; and then to obſerve, That the change in regeneration doth properly conſiſt in a ſtrong inward conviction of the vanity of wordly enjoyments of every kind; and a perſuaſion, that the favor and enjoyment of God is infinitely ſuperior to them all. Whatever other differences there may be, this will be found in every child of God, from the higheſt to the loweſt, from the richeſt to the pooreſt: from the wiſeſt to the moſt ignorant; and from the oldeſt to the youngeſt. Every ſuch one will be able to ſay with the Pſalmiſt, "There be many that ſay, "Who will ſhew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light "of thy countenance upon us. Thou haſt put gladneſs "in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and "their wine increaſed. I will both lay me down in peace, "and ſleep, for thou, Lord, only makeſt me dwell in ſafe-"ty."*

I ſhall afterwards have occaſion more fully to explain the comparative influence of this deſire; but before I conclude this ſection, muſt make the two following remarks: 1. That the favor of God muſt appear to the believer as abſolutely neceſſary to his comfort. 2. As full and ſufficient for that purpoſe.

1. He that is born again, conſiders the favor of God as abſolutely neceſſary to his comfort. He ſees the emptineſs and inherent vanity of all things elſe. Even when the world ſmiles, even when things ſucceed with him to his wiſh, he will not reſt ſatisfied with any, or all temporal mercies. He will, above all, deſire an intereſt in that love which God beareth to his "choſen people," a right by promiſe or covenant to the uſe of preſent comforts, and the favor and protection of his ſpecial providence. How contrary this to the temper of many, who have a name to live while they are dead? If the world ſmiles, they follow it with eagerneſs, and embrace it with complacency, while they are cold and indifferent in their deſires towards God. Perhaps, when they are diſtreſſed with outward calamities; when experience conſtrains them to confeſs the vanity of the creature, they cry to God for relief. But when eaſe

* Pſal. iv. 6, 7, 8.

and prosperity return, they soon forget his works, are well pleased with their condition, and neither grieve for his absence, nor are afraid of his anger. This shews plainly, that whatever occasional symptoms they may discover, they are supremely and habitually possessed by a love of the world, and desire of sensual gratification. In opposition to this, every real Christian sees the favor of God to be so absolutely necessary, that he cannot be without it. He sees it to be more necessary than riches, honors, or pleasures; nay, than health, or even life itself; all which he values chiefly as they are the fruits of the divine bounty, as tokens of divine love, and as they afford him an opportunity of promoting the divine glory. He is ready to say with the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and "there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee: my "flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my "heart, and my portion for ever."*

2. He that is born again, considers the favor of God as full and sufficient for his comfort and happiness. That is to say, he is habitually satisfied with this as his portion, whether there be abundance or straitness as to outward provision. He counts the favor of God as absolutely necessary, but nothing else is considered as such. No earthly enjoyments can satisfy him without God's favor; but this will satisfy him, be his outward condition what it will. I am far from meaning to affirm, that every good man is free from the least rising murmur, the least impatient or rebellious thought. If it were so with any man, he would be perfect in holiness; but I mean to signify, that this is his habitual and prevailing temper. He is inwardly convinced, that those alone are happy; and that they are, and shall be, compleatly happy, who are reconciled to God, and the objects of his special love. His own remaining attachment to present things, and immoderate sorrow under outward calamity, he sincerely laments as his weakness, and humbly confesses as his sin. He endeavors to supply the void left by every earthly comfort, when it is withdrawn, by the fulness and all-sufficiency of God. He

* Ps. lxxiii. 25, 26.

poſſeſſes, in ſome meaſure, and breathes after more and more of the temper expreſſed in the two following paſſages of ſcripture: "Although my houſe be not ſo with God, "yet he hath made with me an everlaſting convenant, or- "dered in all things, and ſure; for this is all my ſalvation, "and all my deſire."* Although the fig-tree ſhall not "bloſſom, neither ſhall fruit be in the vines; the labor "of the olive ſhall fail, and the field ſhall yield no meat; "the flock ſhall be cut off from the fold, and there ſhall be "no herd in the ſtalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I "will joy in the God of my ſalvation."†

Thus I have endeavored to point out wherein the change in regeneration doth immediately and properly conſiſt. It is juſt the recovery of the moral image of God upon the heart; that is to ſay, to love him ſupremely, and ſerve him ultimately, as our higheſt end; and to delight in him ſuperlatively, as our chief good. This recovery, however, is but begun on earth. It is gradually improved in the progreſs of ſanctification, and ſhall be fully compleated at the reſurrection of the juſt. The ſum of the moral law is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and ſoul, and ſtrength, and mind. This is the duty of every rational creature; and, in order to obey it perfectly, no part of our inward affection or actual ſervice ought to be, at any time, or in the leaſt degree, miſapplied. This is the caſe with no mere man, while he continues in the body. But regeneration conſiſts in the principle being implanted, obtaining the aſcendancy, and habitually prevailing over its oppoſite. Even in thoſe who are born again, there will ſtill be many ſtruggles between the "law "of ſin in their members," and the "law of God in their "minds." This we find deeply lamented by the apoſtle Paul: "O wretched man that I am, who ſhall deliver "me from the body of this death?"‡ It ought to give unſpeakable conſolation to the chriſtian, when he reflects, that the ſeed which is planted by divine grace, ſhall be preſerved by divine power. A gracious God will neither ſuffer it to be ſmothered by contending weeds, nor deſtroy-

* 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. † Habbak. iii. 17, 18. ‡ Rom. vii. 24.

ed by the inclemency of this tempeſtuous climate, till it be tranſplanted into the milder regions of peace and ſerenity above.

SECT. III.

The effects of regeneration; with some of the principal evidences of its sincerity.

IN the further proſecution of this head, I propoſed to mention ſome of the principal evidences and fruits of a ſaving change. Theſe, no doubt, it were eaſy with ſufficient propriety greatly to extend and enlarge, becauſe they include all the marks and ſigns of real religion, ſuited to every character and every ſituation in which a chriſtian can be placed. The heart being renewed, the life will of neceſſity be reformed, and holineſs in all manner of converſation, including the duties of piety towards God, and juſtice and charity towards men, will be its native and genuine effect. But this would be too wide and general a field. I find moſt writers on this ſubject take particular notice of the new views and apprehenſions which the regenerate perſon hath of himſelf, and every other thing or perſon to which he ſtands related. I ſhall therefore very ſhortly obſerve, he who is born again, diſcovers his new nature and life by new apprehenſions of God—of himſelf—of the world—of eternity—of Jeſus Chriſt the Saviour of ſinners—and of all the ordinances of his appointment.

The regenerate perſon has new views of God, both in reſpect of greatneſs and goodneſs. He really and inwardly believes the being, preſence, power and providence of God, which he in a great meaſure diſbelieved before. Whereas formerly, even what he did believe of God was ſeldom in his thoughts; now it is almoſt impoſſible for him to look upon any thing, or perſon, or event, without conſidering its relation to God. O what "terrible majeſ-"ty" does his ſanctified underſtanding perceive in this Being of Beings, compared to the times of his former blindneſs? What a luſtre and glory does the opened eye ſee in all the divine perfections? Above all, what a ra-

viſhing and aſtoniſhing view has he of the divine goodneſs and love? Wicked men, governed by ſelf-love, are therefore inſenſible of obligations. Inordinate in their deſires, they are never ſatisfied with their poſſeſſions: whereas the child of God diſcovers and confeſſes the infinite goodneſs of his Creator in all his mercies, of the leaſt of which he is not worthy.

He hath quite new apprehenſions of himſelf, his own character and ſtate. Before, he thought himſelf his own maſter, looked upon every religious law as a hard and tyrannical reſtraint; but now, he ſees that he belongs to God: he now remembers his Creator, confeſſes his obligations, and mourns for his tranſgreſſions. A converted ſinner often admires and ſtands aſtoniſhed at his own former conduct. He wonders at the boldneſs of a poor guilty helpleſs rebel, perhaps curſing and blaſpheming, perhaps rioting in ſenſuality and luſt. He wonders that the power of God did not arreſt him in his courſe, and by ſome ſignal ſtroke, make him a ſtanding monument of righteous indignation. He trembles to think of his former ſtate, and it excites in him a deep and lively acknowledgment of the riches of divine grace. How great a ſenſe of this does the apoſtle Paul often expreſs in his own caſe; "who was before a blaſphemer, and a perſecutor, "and injurious.——This is a faithful ſaying, and worthy "of all acceptation, that Chriſt Jeſus came into the world "to ſave ſinners, of whom I am chief."*

The above is often connected with, and increaſed by, his views of the world and of worldly men. The charm is now broke; the falſe colors are now taken off from the world and all its enjoyments. How ardently did he love them once? how eagerly did he proſecute them? and how rich did he eſteem them? He envied every one who poſſeſſed them, and thought that none ſuch could fail of being completely happy. But now, he can never ſeparate the idea of riches from temptation, and often conſiders the dreadful change of ſtate in thoſe who are carried about in pomp and grandeur on earth; who are cloathed in purple

* 1 Tim. i. 13, 15.

and fine linen, and fare ſumptuouſly every day; but are, in a little time, tormented in hell fire. Formerly, he valued perſons by their ſtation, by their wealth, by their ſpirit and genius, or other natural qualifications. But now, a chriſtian in a cottage appears more honorable and more amiable than a blaſphemer in a palace. Now, his heart is joined to every ſervant of Chriſt, though deſpiſed in the world, though emaciated by ſickneſs, though deformed with old age; nay, though loathſome and ſordid through penury and want. He ſees the beauty of theſe excellent ones of the earth, under all their preſent diſadvantages, and in them is all his delight. With regard to perſons of an oppoſite character, the penitent often recollects, with a bleeding heart, his fondneſs for, and attachment to, ſinful companions; and his kindneſs to them, is converted into a yearning tenderneſs and compaſſion for their miſerable ſtate.

Further, the regenerate perſon has new apprehenſions of eternity. Formerly, the ſhadows and vanities of time ſo engroſſed his thoughts, ſo filled and occupied his ſight, that eternity was ſeldom at all, and never fully in view. But now, it is frequently and ſtrongly upon his mind. Now it, as it were, joins itſelf with, and points out its own relation to every ſubject, and its concern in every purſuit. Now, it is preſent as the object of faith, to correct the falſe repreſentations of ſenſe, and to oppoſe the unjuſt claim of earthly and momentary gratifications. Formerly, things unſeen were counted in a manner precarious and fabulous, of ſmall moment in any determination: but now, there is ſuch a diſcovery of the great realities of another world, as weighs down all created things, and makes them feel as a feather in the balance.

Let us here ſtand ſtill, and pauſe a little. Let me beſeech every reader to ponder this reflection, which I cannot paſs. Oh! what concern have we all in everlaſting endleſs eternity! O ſubject without bounds! Who is able to do it juſtice in words? Who is able to reach it even in thought? Happineſs that ſhall continue through everlaſting ages. Miſery, anguiſh, torment, that ſhall never have an end. Are we all, without exception, to be ſo divided

at laſt? Yes; the great Judge ſhall ſeparate the righteous from the wicked, and ſhall ſet the one on his right-hand, and the other on his left. Shall then companions on earth; ſhall fellow-citizens, and fellow-ſoldiers; the deareſt friends and the neareſt relations, be parted aſunder, and take a long, long, eternal farewel? O the ſtrong deceit and illuſion of ſin, that is able to hide eternity from dying men! O the inconceivable blindneſs of thoſe who are unmindful of a future ſtate, while they inhabit theſe tabernacles of clay, which are ſo often tottering; which are daily waſting, and ſhall ſo ſoon fall in pieces and crumble into duſt! How is it poſſible we ſhould forget, that in a little time "we "muſt all appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt."

The regenerate perſon has alſo new views of Jeſus Chriſt, the great and only Saviour of ſinners. Before, he was "without form or comelineſs, or any beauty, that he "ſhould deſire him." Before, (as is, alas! the caſe with very many) all the truths, relating to the perſon, character, and office of a Mediator, were hated as abſurdities, or deſpiſed as enthuſiaſm. They were nick-named nonſenſe, cant, and unintelligible ſtuff. Or if decency forbad this, they were altogether cold and without reliſh. But now, the name of a Saviour is "precious—even as ointment "poureth forth."* The ſtrongeſt language is too weak to expreſs his gratitude, or breathe out his love. "He is "white and ruddy, the chief among ten thouſand:—yea, "he is altogether lovely."† How great is the difference between the ſelf-righteous formaliſt and the humble penitent? The one, truſting in himſelf that he is righteous, knows little of the value of a Saviour; the other, deeply penetrated with a ſenſe of guilt, and ſtrongly conſcious of abſolute weakneſs, "counts all things but loſs, for the ex-"cellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus his Lord; and "deſires to be found in him, not having his own righte-"ouſneſs, which is of the law, but that which is through "the faith of Chriſt, the righteouſneſs that is of God by "faith."‡

* Cant. i. 3. † Cant. v. 10. ‡ Phil. iii. 8.

Again, the regenerate perſon has new views of the ordinances of Chriſt's appointment. They were formerly his burden, now they are his delight. Before the ſabbath wore, as it were, a ſable garb, and an offenſive gloom. It was looked upon as a piece of confinement and reſtraint. He was ready to ſay, "What a wearineſs is it; when will "the Sabbath be over, and the new moon, that we may ſet "forth corn, and ſell wheat?" But now, he calls it a delight, the "holy of the Lord, and honorable." Now, he thirſts after the water of life, eſteems, loves, and deſires the word of God. He now readily joins the holy Pſalmiſt in all theſe fervent expreſſions to be found in his writings, of affection to the truths and ordinances of God. "O how "love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.* The "law of thy mouth is better to me than thouſands of gold "and ſilver.† My ſoul thirſteth for thee; my fleſh longeth "for thee, in a dry and thirſty land, where no water is. "To ſee thy power and thy glory, ſo as I have ſeen it in "the ſanctuary.‡ I was glad when they ſaid unto me, "let us go into the houſe of the Lord; our feet ſhall ſtand "within thy gates, O Jeruſalem!"||

Suffer me now to conclude this general account of the ſpirit and temper of the regenerate, with a few particular characters, by which they will commonly be diſtinguiſhed.

1. The new nature will diſcover itſelf by great humility. There is no diſpoſition more the object of divine abhorrence and deteſtation, than pride; nor conſequently, any more amiable and neceſſary than humility. We are told, that "God reſiſteth the proud, but giveth grace to the "humble."* To the ſame purpoſe the prophet Iſaiah, "For thus ſaith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth "eternity, whoſe name is holy, I dwell in the high and ho-"ly place; with him alſo that is of a contrite and humble "ſpirit, to revive the ſpirit of the humble, and to revive "the heart of the contrite ones."† Pride was the ſin by which the angels fell from their glory and happineſs. It

* Pſal. cxix. 97. † Pſal. cxix. 72. ‡ Pſal. lxiii. 1, 2.
|| Pſal. cxxii. 1, 2. * James iv. 6. † Iſ. lvii. 15.

appears to have been the chief ingredient in the firſt ſin of man; and in general, the leading part of a ſinful character. Before there can be any ſaving change; before there can be any eſteem or reliſh of the goſpel of the grace of God, there muſt be a deep humility of mind, and thorough conviction of guilt and wretchedneſs. This muſt ſtill continue, and have a conſtant and viſible effect upon the believer's temper and carriage. The truth is the way in which a ſinner's peace is made with God, the ground on which his hope and comfort is founded, and the means of his improvement in the ſpiritual life, all conſpire in making him humble. "Where is boaſting? It is excluded. "No fleſh is permitted to glory" in the divine preſence. Every ſincere penitent, every real believer, every profiting diſciple of Chriſt, learns the emptineſs of the creature, the fulneſs, ſovereignty, power, wiſdom, and grace of the Creator and Redeemer, from all that he hears, and from all that he feels.

In his former ſtate, either his ignorance of God, or his wrong views of God and of himſelf, made him ſet a high value upon his own intereſt, and think he had a high claim to happineſs, and ſucceſs of every kind. This made him repine at the courſe of Providence, and very hardly allow that juſtice was done him when his attempts were defeated, or his deſires diſappointed. What ſullen impatience do many ſhew under the hand of God? What corroding envy poſſeſſes their minds when they take a view of the (perhaps miſtaken) happineſs of others? But he that is born again is deeply ſenſible, that he deſerves nothing at the hand of God. His habitual ſentiments and language, are the ſame with what we find in ſcripture ſo frequent with the ſaints: "I am not worthy of the leaſt of "all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou haſt ſhew-"ed unto thy ſervant*.—It is of the Lord's mercies that "we are not conſumed, becauſe his compaſſions fail not.† "Unto me, who am leſs than the leaſt of all ſaints, is this "grace given."‡ Whereas formerly he was apt to view his own character with much complacence, and to have

* Gen. xxxii. 10. † Lam. iii. 22. ‡ Epheſ. iii. 8.

high thoughts of the dignity of human virtue, now he hath changed the ſtern pride of philoſophy, for the ſelf-denial and meekneſs of the goſpel. He has ſuch views of the glory and majeſty of God, of the purity of his law, and of the holineſs of his nature, that he ſinks, as it were, into nothing in his own ſight, and knows not how to throw himſelf into a low enough poſture in the divine preſence. Agreeably to this we have a ſtriking picture, drawn by our Saviour in the parable of the Phariſee and publican, of true penitence, particularly as ſtanding in oppoſition to ſelf-ſufficiency and pride: "The Phariſee ſtood and prayed thus with himſelf, God, I thank thee, that I am not as "other men are, extortioners, unjuſt, adulterers, or even "as this publican. I faſt twice in the week, I give tithes "of all that I poſſeſs. And the publican ſtanding afar "off, would not lift up ſo much as his eyes unto heaven, "but ſmote upon his breaſt, ſaying, God be merciful to me "a ſinner."*

Further, true religion makes a man humble toward his fellow creatures, as well as toward God. The one, indeed, is the certain and neceſſary effect of the other. Every thing which one man can enjoy in preference to another, and which ordinarily becomes the fuel of pride, is the gift of God, and therefore there is no room left to glory. What diſtinction can any man enjoy above another, but it muſt be of one of theſe two kinds, worldly advantages, or ſpiritual gifts? Now worldly advantages are of no ſuch value, in the eye of a real Chriſtian, as to be matter of boaſting. All ſwelling on this account is effectually reſtrained by true religion: that which brings eternity in view, makes all temporal things of wonderfully little value to have or to loſe. And even ſtill leſs will a good man glory in his advantages over others of a ſpiritual kind. Pride can never be ſo greatly miſplaced, as when it ſhows itſelf here. The Chriſtian will ſay to himſelf, in the words of the apoſtle Paul, "For who maketh thee to differ from "another? And what haſt thou, that thou didſt not re- "ceive? Now if thou didſt receive it, why doſt thou glory, "as if thou hadſt not received it?"†

* Luke xviii. 11, 12, 13. † 1 Cor. iv. 7.

I cannot help alſo obſerving here, that every true convert is naturally led to conſider himſelf as the chief of ſinners, and every real Chriſtian to reckon that others are preferable to him in holineſs and ſpiritual attainments. This is often taken notice of by religious writers, in a perfect conſiſtency both with ſcripture and experience. We ſee this was the caſe with the apoſtle Paul, that eminently holy, faithful, and active miniſter of Jeſus Chriſt. He expreſsly ſtiles himſelf the "chief of ſinners;" and ſays, "Howbeit, for this cauſe I obtained mercy, that in me "firſt," or in me as a capital and leading inſtance, "Jeſus "Chriſt might ſhew forth all long-ſuffering, for a pattern "to them which ſhould hereafter believe on him to life "everlaſting."* And elſewhere to the ſame purpoſe, with a view to his miniſterial labors: "For I am the leaſt of "the apoſtles, that am not meet to be called an apoſtle, "becauſe I perſecuted the church of God; but by the grace "of God, I am what I am, and his grace which was be-"ſtowed upon me was not in vain, but I labored more "abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of "God which was with me."† This is eaſy to be accounted for. Every man muſt have a far more clear diſcovery and conviction of his own ſins, in their heinous nature and aggravating circumſtances, than of thoſe of any other, as well as a greater inſight into the remaining corruption of his own heart. Hence it is natural for him to conclude, that none have been ſo deeply indebted as himſelf to the riches of divine grace, for pardon and recovery.

From every view we can take of the matter, therefore, it is plain that the regenerate perſon muſt be, according to the ſtrong and beautiful language of the Holy Scripture, "clothed with humility." He muſt be very humble; he muſt be humble in every reſpect; he muſt be inwardly, habitually, conſtantly, univerſally humble. I know no diſpoſition better fitted either to determine our character in general, or to decide when the Chriſtian is diſcharging any duty in a proper manner. It is alſo a good touch-ſtone by which to try a profeſſion, or apparent zeal for re-

* Tim. i. 16. † 1 Cor. xv. 9, 10.

ligion. I am ſenſible it is a duty openly to profeſs Chriſt before men, and that he has pronounced a dreadful threatning againſt thoſe who ſhall meanly deny him: "Whoſoever ſhall be aſhamed of me, or of my words, in this "adulterous and ſinful generation, of him alſo ſhall the "Son of Man be aſhamed, when he cometh in the glory "of his Father with the holy angels."* There are many of the duties of a Chriſtian which require a firm reſolution, a boldneſs and fortitude of mind; yet even this ſhould be accompanied with humility. Unneceſſary oſtentation is always a ſuſpicious ſign. A Chriſtian ſhould be conſtrained, in all ſuch caſes, by a ſenſe of duty, and enter upon his work with a diffidence of himſelf, and reliance on divine ſtrength.

Let not the reader think this part of the ſubject tedious, or extended beyond its due bounds; let him rather enter on a deep and careful ſearch into his own heart, and ſee how it ſtands with himſelf in this particular. There is often a counterfeit humility. A proud and vain-glorious carriage is odious to man as well as to God. Pride in one man, is always in open hoſtility againſt pride in another; nay pride, when diſcovered, effectually defeats its own purpoſe. Not only is a man who is vain of nothing, juſtly and univerſally contemptible, but in all caſes, as Solomon ſays, "for a man to ſearch his own glory, is not glory." Even the moſt eminent abilities, the moſt amiable qualifications, and the moſt laudable actions, are greatly ſullied by an apparent vanity and thirſt of praiſe. It is hardly poſſible to bring others to acknowledge that man's worth who aſſerts it with his own tongue, and abſolves the world by paying tribute to himſelf. Hence there is a remarkable obſervation of a foreign writer of eminent piety and learning, to this purpoſe, That a worldly principle, when it is attended with ſound judgment, and in its higheſt perfection, does homage to religion, by imitating its effects. And, indeed, what is all politeneſs of carriage, but a ſort of hypocritical humility, and an empty profeſſion of that deference to the judgment and kindneſs to the perſons of others, which a true Chriſtian hath implanted in his heart?

* Mark viii. 38.

How ſelf-deceiving is pride? How many are there even of thoſe who have a form of godlineſs, who are wrapt up in themſelves, who would have all men to eſteem them, who would have their opinions to prevail, and their meaſures to take place, in every matter of the ſmalleſt conſequence, and are never ſatisfied but when this is the caſe? Of this they are often quite inſenſible themſelves, when every one about them perceives it without the leaſt difficulty or uncertainty. Nay, is it not very ſurpriſing and very lamentable, that there is ſtill ſo much pride to be found even in good men, which betrays itſelf by many evidences, impatience of contradiction in their ſentiments, exceſſive grief, or immoderate reſentment, when their characters are attacked by unjuſt and malicious ſlander? It is lawful to be ſure, in ſuch a caſe, to embrace every opportunity of vindication; but, as it is not wonderful that it ſhould happen, ſo the real Chriſtian ſhould ſtudy to bear it with meekneſs, and to forgive it ſincerely, as he aſks forgiveneſs of God.

From all this it is eaſy to ſee, that the regenerate perſon muſt be humble. Believe it, O Chriſtian, ſo much as you have of humility, ſo much you have of true religion. So much as your ſentiments are altered in this reſpect, ſo much you have ground to think the change to be real; and ſo much as you take root downwards in true humility, in the ſame proportion you will bear fruit upwards, in all the duties of a regular, exemplary, and uſeful converſation.

2. Another excellent and uſeful evidence of regeneration, is the ſanctification of natural and lawful affections. There are, perhaps, few either more ſure or more plain evidences of real religion than this. Regeneration does not conſiſt in giving us new ſouls, new faculties, or new affections, but in giving a new tendency and effect to thoſe we had before. There are many perſons to whom we bear naturally an affection, and it is far from being the deſign of religion to deſtroy this affection, but to regulate it in its meaſure, to keep it in its proper channel, and direct it to its proper end. This is a part of the ſubject which I have always thought of great moment and importance, on more accounts than one. It hath pleaſed God, by joining us

together in ſociety, to conſtitute a great variety of relations; theſe ties are of God's own making, and our affections to all perſons ſo related to us are natural, and in ſome of them very ſtrong. How then do they operate? In what manner do they expreſs themſelves? Nothing will more evidently prove what is the ruling diſpoſition of the heart. Whenever we love others ſincerely, we ſhew it by deſiring and endeavoring to procure for them thoſe bleſſings which we ourſelves moſt highly eſteem.

Let us take any one of theſe relations for an example. Does a parent ſincerely love his children? Religion doth not weaken, but ſtrengthen this affection, and add to the force of his obligation to ſerve them. But if the parent truly loveth God above all, how will his love to his children be expreſſed? Surely by deſiring, above all, that they may be "born again." Their following ſinful courſes will give him unſpeakably more grief than their poverty, ſickneſs, or even death itſelf. He will be more concerned to make them, and more delighted to ſee them, good than great; and, for this purpoſe, every ſtep of their education will be directed. Would not every parent ſhudder at the thoughts of ſending a beloved child to a houſe infected with the plague, or any other ſcene where health or life would be in imminent danger? What then ſhall we think of thoſe parents who, from the ſingle proſpect of gain, without ſcruple, place their children in houſes deeply infected with the leproſy of ſin, and expoſe them, without the leaſt neceſſity, to the moſt dangerous temptations?

I know there are ſome inſtances in ſcripture of perſons who have been conſidered as very pious themſelves, who yet were ſhamefully negligent in this branch of their duty. Of theſe Eli, mentioned in the book of Samuel, is one, whoſe ſons, though in the moſt ſacred office, "made themſelves vile, and he reſtrained them not." I imagine I could eaſily bring in doubt, if not the reality, at leaſt the eminence of his piety, and others of the ſame kind, though often taken for granted, without much examination; but I ſhall only obſerve what an oppoſite account is given of the divine conduct toward Eli and toward Abraham, the father of the faithful. He revealed his will, and employed

in his meſſage the child Samuel, to the neglect of Eli, grown old in his courts, and denounced the moſt ſevere and terrible judgments againſt him and his houſe: "Be-"hold, I will do a thing in Iſrael, at which both the ears "of every one that heareth it ſhall tingle; in that day I "will perform againſt Eli all things which I have ſpoken "concerning his houſe: when I begin I will alſo make an "end. For I have told him that I will judge his houſe "for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth."* On the contrary, ſee the honorable diſtinction put upon Abraham: "And the Lord ſaid, Shall I hide from Abraham that "thing which I do, ſeeing that Abraham ſhall ſurely be-"come a great nation, and all the nations of the earth "ſhall be bleſſed in him. For I know him, that he will "command his children and his houſhold after him, and "they ſhall keep the way of the Lord, to do juſtice and "judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that "which he hath ſpoken of him."†

Nothing indeed can be more plain from reaſon itſelf, than that, in proportion to the impreſſion which parents have upon their own minds of the importance of ſalvation, will be their concern and care that their children alſo may be the heirs of everlaſting life. Suffer me to aſk every parent who reads this diſcourſe, or rather to beſeech all ſuch, to aſk themſelves ſeriouſly, what are their own ſtrongeſt deſires and hopes concerning their children? In thoſe moments when your affections are fondeſt, and your partial flattering expectations moſt diſtinctly formed, are you obliged to confeſs that your minds run much more upon the proſpect of your childrens living in affluence and ſplendor, or being promoted to places of honor and truſt, than their being brought to a ſaving acquaintance with Chriſt and him crucified, that whether they live or die they may be the Lord's? If this is the caſe, you have juſt ground to fear that you are of that unhappy number who "favor not the things that be of God, but the things that "be of man."

* 1 Sam. iii. 11, 12, 13. † Gen. xviii. 17, 18, 19.

3. Another excellent evidence of regeneration is, the moderation of our attachment to worldly enjoyments in general, and habitual ſubmiſſion to the will of God. So ſoon as this change takes place, it will immediately and certainly abate the meaſure of our attachment to all earthly things. Formerly they were the all of the ſoul, its portion and its reſt; but now a clear diſcovery being made of greater and better bleſſings, they muſt fall back into the ſecond place. There is a wonderful difference between the rate and value of preſent poſſeſſions of any kind, in the eye of him who lives under the impreſſions of eternity, and of him who believes it but uncertainly, who underſtands it very imperfectly, and who thinks of it as ſeldom as conſcience will give him leave. It muſt be confeſſed we are all apt to be immoderate in our attachment to outward bleſſings; this is the effect and evidence of the weakneſs of our faith: but, ſo far as faith is in exerciſe, it muſt mortify carnal affection. There is no way in which an object appears ſo little, as when it is contraſted with one infinitely greater, which is plainly the caſe here. The truth is, time and eternity, things temporal and things ſpiritual, are the oppoſite and rival objects of human attention and eſteem. It is impoſſible that one of them can be exalted, or obtain influence in any heart, without a proportional depreſſion of the other. They are, alſo, as they ſeverally prevail, the marks to diſtinguiſh thoſe who are, and thoſe who are not, brought again from the dead. For as the apoſtle ſays, "To be carnally minded is death, but to be ſpiritually minded is life and peace."*

Further, it is not only in abating the meaſure of our attachment to worldly things that religion ſhews itſelf, and the change is diſcovered, but in the uſe and application of them. The real Chriſtian's powers and faculties, poſſeſſions and influence, are conſecrated to God. His abilities are laid out for the glory of God. He no more conſiders them as a mean of excelling others, and getting to himſelf a name, but of doing good. He finds it his higheſt

* Rom. viii. 6.

pleaſure to ſerve God with his talents; he thinks it his duty to plead for him in his converſation, to honor him with his ſubſtance, to enforce and ratify the divine laws by his authority and example.

The ſame thing ſhews plainly why a Chriſtian muſt manifeſt his new nature by ſubmiſſion to the divine will. Does he receive his mercies from God? Does he love them leſs than God? Does he eſteem it his duty to uſe them in his ſervice? And can he poſſibly refuſe to reſign them to his pleaſure? I am ſenſible that reſignation at the will of God, abſolute and unconditional, is a very difficult duty, but it is what every believer habitually ſtudies to attain. He chides his remaining impatience and complaints, grieves at the continuing ſtruggles of his imperfectly renewed will, and is ſenſible that in this the ſuperiority of his affection to God above the creature ought to appear. Unrenewed perſons, when their earthly hopes are diſappointed, immediately renew the purſuit; they only change the object to one more within their reach, or they alter their meaſures, and endeavor to amend the ſcheme; but real Chriſtians, receiving a conviction of the vanity of all created things, ſeek their refuge and conſolation in the fulneſs and all-ſufficiency of God.

SECT. IV.

A more particular enquiry into what properly conſtitutes the ſincerity of the change.

THUS I have given a ſuccinct view of the moſt remarkable effects and viſible evidences of regeneration. I cannot, however, ſatisfy myſelf with this, becauſe I am perſuaded the great queſtion is, how far they ought to go, and to what meaſure of ſtrength and uniformity they ought to arrive. There are not a few who may, in a certain degree, ſincerely think themſelves poſſeſſed of moſt or all the diſpoſitions mentioned above, whoſe ſtate is nevertheleſs very much to be ſuſpected. On the other hand, perhaps, ſome of the humbleſt, that is to ſay, the very beſt, may be in much fear concerning themſelves, becauſe they

do not perceive either the vigor or ſteadineſs in their holy diſpoſitions which they greatly deſire and are ſenſible they ought to attain. Beſides, what hath been hitherto ſaid is only general, viz. that thoſe who are born again will have new apprehenſions of things, will be humble, mortified to the world, and ſubmiſſive to the will of God. In this way it will be moſt applicable to, or at leaſt moſt ſenſible in thoſe who had once gone great lengths in profanity, and were, by the almighty and ſovereign grace of God, ſnatched as "brands from the burning." The oppoſition between their new and old characters is ordinarily ſo great, that it will not admit of any doubt. To ſome others it may be neceſſary to make a more ſtrict and particular enquiry into the nature of ſincerity, and what is the full and proper evidence of the reality of the change.

That the reader may form as clear and diſtinct conceptions on this ſubject as poſſible, he may be pleaſed to recollect what was obſerved above, That perfect holineſs conſiſts in having the heart wholly poſſeſt by the love of God, without the mixture of any inferior or baſer paſſion; and that regeneration conſiſts in a ſupreme deſire to glorify God, and a preference of his favor to every other enjoyment. Now what chiefly occaſions difficulty in diſcerning the reality of this change is, that there is much unſubdued ſin remaining in the children of God, and that there are many counterfeit graces, or appearances of religion, in thoſe who are, notwithſtanding, in the "gall of bitterneſs, and in the bond of iniquity."

That there is a great degree of unmortified corruption ſtill remaining in the ſaints of God, and that not ſo much as one is wholly free from it, is apparent from too many melancholy proofs. It appears from the pathetic complaint of the apoſtle Paul, formerly referred to, of the law in his members warring againſt the law of God in his mind. It appears, alſo, from the groſs ſins into which ſome eminently holy perſons have been ſuffered occaſionally to fall, through the ſtrength of temptation, as David's adultery and murder, Solomon's idolatry, the apoſtle Peter's denial of his maſter, and ſeveral others recorded in ſcripture.

On the other hand, there are alſo counterfeit graces, common or imperfect operations of the Spirit, which do not iſſue in a real converſion and ſavage change. This it will be proper to keep in mind, and perhaps, alſo, to attend a little to the proofs of it both from ſcripture and experience. That the word of God has ſome effect even upon thoſe who continue unrenewed, is plain from many examples recorded in the ſacred volume. We read of a Felix trembling at the thoughts of a judgment to come: "And as he "reaſoned of righteouſneſs, temperance, and judgment "to come, Felix trembled, and anſwered, Go thy way "for this time, when I have a convenient ſeaſon I "will call for thee."* But we are not informed that he ever found that convenient ſeaſon, or deſired to hear any more of ſuch words.

In the parable of the ſower we have a character deſcribed of thoſe who not only, "heard" the word, but "received" it with joy, and on whom it had an immediate and viſible, though only a temporary effect. "Some fell upon ſtony "places, where they had not much earth, and forthwith "they ſprung up, becauſe they had no deepneſs of earth; "and when the ſun was up they were ſcorched, and, be-"cauſe they had not root, they withered away†.—He that "received the ſeed into ſtony places, the ſame is he that "heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet "hath he not root in himſelf, but dureth for a while: for "when tribulation or perſecution ariſeth becauſe of the "word, by and by he is offended."‡ We read alſo of a Herod, who not only heard the word gladly, but did many things.—"For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a "juſt man, and an holy, and obſerved him, and when he "heard him he did many things, and heard him gladly."‖ Nay, we ſee even Ahab, the profane prince of Iſrael, humbling himſelf, and putting on ſackcloth, under the denunciation of divine wrath. Neither have we any reaſon, from the circumſtances of the ſtory, to believe that this was wholly hypocritical, but the contrary. "And it came to

* Acts xxiv. 25. † Matt. xiii. 5, 6. ‡ Ibid. ver. 20, 21.
‖ Mark vi. 20.

" paſs when Ahab heard theſe words, that he rent his clothes, " and put ſackcloth on his fleſh, and faſted, and lay in " ſackcloth, and went ſoftly."* Theſe things, and all others of the ſame kind, even in wicked men, are repreſented as the effect of the operation of the Spirit, in many paſſages of ſcripture. I ſhall only mention one, which is pretty remarkable, and well merits our attention. " For " it is impoſſible for thoſe who were once enlightened, and " have taſted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers " of the Holy Ghoſt, and have taſted the good word of God, " and the power of the world to come, if they ſhould fall " away, to renew them again to repentance, ſeeing they " crucify to themſelves the Son of God afreſh, and put " him to an open ſhame."†

The ſame thing indeed appears plainly from the ſtate of the world, and in a particular manner from that variety of partial characters which I have formerly deſcribed. There are many things which have a religious appearance, and are taken by the deluded poſſeſſor for religion, when at bottom there is no real religion at all; and " mene " tekel" ſhall be written upon them in the day of trial. There is a long gradation of characters between the openly profane ſinner, with a hardened heart, a ſeared conſcience, and a ſhameleſs countenance, on the one hand; and the refined, ſelf-deceiving hypocrite, with his duties and his forms, on the other: between thoſe who are furious, violent, and malignant enemies to religion in profeſſion and practice; and thoſe, who anſwer diſcreetly with the young man in the goſpel; and of whom it may be ſaid, as our Saviour ſays of him, that they " are not " far from the kingdom of God." This ſhews at once the importance and difficulty of pointing out the great and diſtinguiſhing characters of real religion, and ſhewing how it eſſentially differs from all counterfeits.

But now, from the account given above of the nature of regeneration, and what hath been further added in illuſtration of it, we may ſee how this diſtinction is to be made, as far as it can be made by any, excepting the

* 1 Kings xxi. 27. † Heb. vi. 4.

great Searcher of hearts. I apprehend, that the great and diſtinguiſhing mark of the truth and ſincerity of religion in general, and of every gracious diſpoſition in particular, ariſes from comparing it with its oppoſite. It is "the pre-"vailing intereſt of God and the Redeemer in the heart, "above the intereſt of inferior good; the habitual compa-"rative preference we give to his ſervice and enjoyment, "before every other object of deſire." This muſt be proved by its effects daily. And agreeably to this, our bleſſed Lord ſays, "He that loveth father or mother more "than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth ſon "or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me; and he "that taketh not his croſs, and followeth after me, is not "worthy of me."* And again, in yet ſtronger terms, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mo-"ther, and wife and children, and brethren and ſiſters; "yea, and his own life alſo, he cannot be my diſciple."† Would you therefore know whether you are born again? Are you in doubt, when you find the ſpirit luſting againſt the fleſh, and the fleſh againſt the ſpirit? Try, by diligent and univerſal examination, which of them is, upon the whole, the ſtrongeſt; which of them habitually yields to the other, when they come in competition. Into this all other marks and ſigns of religion reſolve themſelves at laſt; and from the evidence they give of the prevalence of the love of God in the heart, they derive all their worth and value. Every holy diſpoſition muſt be examined, not by its abſolute, but its comparative ſtrength; and the true knowledge of our ſtate ariſes from the concluſion and reſult of the whole.

There were, in the laſt age, many and great debates among men of piety and learning, whether ſpecial and common grace differ eſſentially in their nature, or if they differ only in degree. What I have juſt now ſaid may, perhaps, be thought by the intelligent reader, to imply my embracing the laſt of theſe opinions. My judgment of this queſtion is the ſame I have formed of many others, that it is unneceſſary, or even hurtful. It has perhaps, if

* Matt. x. 37, 38. † Luke xiv. 26.

examined to the bottom, no diſtinct meaning at all; but if it has any meaning, I am afraid it is a queſtion which it is impoſſible for us to reſolve. That it may be made plain to perſons of common underſtanding, the queſtion is, whether it is moſt proper to ſay, that a wicked man, or an unrenewed perſon, let his behavior be ever ſo unexceptionable, or his experiences ever ſo comfortable, can have no true love to God; no, not in the leaſt degree: or whether we ought not rather to ſay, his love to God is leſs than his love to the creature. I confeſs, I think it is beſt to ſay, in the words of the Holy Ghoſt, that "he loveth the creature more than the Creator"——that "he loveth the praiſe of man more than the praiſe of God;" and for this reaſon, he hath no "true" love, either to God or man.

In the preceding part of this treatiſe, I have affirmed, with ſufficient clearneſs, that there muſt be an eſſential change in order to ſalvation; and that, till this be wrought, the perſon is in ſin, and can do nothing but ſin. The reaſon of this is very plain; that the ſupreme and governing motive of all his actions is wrong, and therefore every one of them muſt be ſo, upon the whole. I ſuppoſe, if they were to explain themſelves fully, this is chiefly meant by thoſe who inſiſt that there is an eſſential difference between ſpecial and common grace. And in this view, no doubt, it is not only certainly true, but a truth of very great importance. It appears, however, on the other hand, equally certain and undeniable, that when we obſerve good diſpoſitions and good actions in one character, and ſee the ſame appearances in another, we have no way by which we can diſcover the difference, but by their perſeverance, and their comparative effects. Neither, indeed, has the perſon himſelf any other rule by which they can be judged. For which reaſon, I would be very willing to affirm both ſides of the above queſtion; to ſay that an unregenerate perſon has no true love to God or his neighbor, and at the ſame time, that this is only becauſe no love but that which is ſupreme and prevalent is true, or will be accepted as ſincere.

Unleſs we take up the matter in this light, we are in danger of doing great hurt on both hands. On the one

hand, it is ready to alarm the pious, humble, and timorous ſoul, if we ſay, that ſpecial grace differs eſſentially from common grace, and that there muſt be ſomething quite different in its kind, as to every gracious diſpoſition, than what ever reſided in hypocrites. Alas! will the fearful perſon ſay, I have ſeen ſome who have gone great lengths, who have been well eſteemed, and well received among all ſerious people; and yet have made ſhipwreck of the faith, diſhonored their profeſſion, and opened the mouths of adverſaries to blaſpheme. They had all the appearance of as much love to God, as much delight in his ſervice, as much zeal for his glory, as much ſtrictneſs, and as much uſefulneſs of converſation; nay, more than I can pretend to. What then am I to think of this? Muſt all my gracious diſpoſitions be eſſentially different from theirs? And how is this difference to be made appear? To all ſuch I would ſay, thoſe unhappy perſons, by their conduct, and that alone, plainly diſcover, that they have either been wholly impoſtors and deceivers of the world, or that they have loved ſome object of carnal affection; ſome luſt, of one kind or another, more than they loved God. The ſtrength of their affections in one way, has been over-balanced by the dominion of corruption in another. And that corruption which has been long diſguiſed or reſtrained, at laſt breaks out with ſo much the greater violence, and the greater noiſe.

Again, on the other hand, by affirming that there is a difference in kind between ſpecial and common grace; and that a hypocrite or unrenewed perſon cannot have the leaſt meaſure of the ſame ſort of love to God or man with a child of God, we are apt to make ſome ſlaves to ſin, upon examining themſelves judge amiſs in their own favor. They cannot help thinking that they have a real unfeigned affection for that which is good in many reſpects; as indeed they have, when it doth not ſtand in competition with their reigning or darling luſt. To give an example of this; it is frequently made a mark of true religion, to love the people of God; and indeed, it is one of the beſt, and when taken in the ſenſe I have mentioned above, as a ſupreme

and prevalent love, it is an infallible ſign. It hath no leſs warrant than the word of God: "We know that we have "paſſed from death unto life, becauſe we love the brethren; "he that loveth not his brother, abideth in death."* But I dare ſay, there are many who live in ſin, and are ſtrangers to the power of godlineſs, who, upon the moſt impartial examination of themſelves, would conclude, that they did love the people of God.

Perhaps ſome will ſay, they may love good men, but they love them for other qualities, and cannot love them becauſe of their piety. Experience tells us the contrary. They may eſteem them, love them, ſpeak well of them, and do them ſervice becauſe of their piety. Nay, I have known (though that is more rare) ſome very looſe livers, who ſeemed to have nothing good about them, but an eſteem of pious perſons, and a deſire to eſpouſe their cauſe, which they continued to do in all ordinary caſes. But ſhould theſe ſervants of God preſume to reprove them ſharply, or hinder them in the enjoyment of their darling luſt, their love would ſoon turn to hatred. Who would not have ſaid that Herod ſincerely loved John Baptiſt, when the very reaſon aſſigned for his reſpect and attendance is that "he was a juſt man and an holy." Yet the ſame Herod, when he was reproved by John for his ſcandalous adultry and inceſt, ſhut him up in priſon. And afterwards, ſo little was his conſtancy, that when the daughter of Herodias had gained upon his affection by her dancing, and involved him in a raſh promiſe, he gratified her mother's ſavage cruelty with the Baptiſt's head. The deſcription of his ſituation of mind is remarkable, but far from being ſingular; we are told, "the king was exceed-"ing ſorry; yet for his oath's ſake, and for their ſakes "that ſat with him, he would not reject her."† Here was love in one ſenſe, or in a certain degree; but he loved the damſel and her mother, and the good opinion of his courtly companions, ſtill more than the faithful preacher.

We have innumerable examples of the ſame thing every day before our eyes. Voluptuous men love the peo-

* 1 John iii. 14. † Mark xvi. 26.

ple of God, but will not obey their ſalutary counſel, becauſe they love their luſts more. Covetous men will love the people of God, and praiſe them, and defend them, but will not open their purſes to provide for them, becauſe they love their ſilver and gold more. What I have ſaid of this diſpoſition, might be eaſily ſhewn to hold with regard to every other. In ſhort, whatever unſeen or inward difference there may be; whatever diverſity of operation of the holy and ſovereign Spirit, the great trial to us is the ſame which Chriſt made of Peter: "Simon, ſon of Jonas, "loveſt thou me more than theſe?" It is good that we ſhould often repeat the queſtion as he did, and bleſſed is that man who is able in ſincerity to ſay with Peter, "Lord "thou knoweſt all things, thou knoweſt that I love thee."*

I am ſenſible, there will be many ready to challenge this, or at leaſt to be inwardly diſſatisfied with it, as too general and undetermined. They will be ready to think, that this leaves the matter ſtill at a great uncertainty; and that it muſt be very difficult to decide in many caſes, whether the love of God or of the world hath the greateſt habitual influence in the heart. The truth is, I am far from denying or diſſembling that it is a matter of great difficulty in many inſtances; nay, as I have hinted in ſome of the former pages of this diſcourſe, there are caſes in which it is altogether impoſſible to come to any certain determination. In ſome, grace and corruption are ſo equally matched, as it were; have ſuch violent ſtruggles, and take their turns ſo often, in reſtraining and governing one another, that it will be hard to tell, till the laſt day, which of them was ſtrongeſt upon the whole. But this is no juſt objection to what I have delivered above. It was never intended that ſuch unequal and variable Chriſtians ſhould enjoy much peace; and if they do, it is ſurely upon ſome idle or imaginary ground. To many it may be juſtly ſaid as Jacob ſaid to his ſon Reuben, "Unſtable as water, thou ſhalt not excel."† Inſtead of deviſing ways, and making ſuppoſitions, to encourage ſuch perſons to think well of their own ſtate, it is a far ſafer, and much

* John xxi. 17. † Gen. xlix. 4.

kinder office, to excite them to a holy jealouſy over themſelves. This indeed ſeems to be the language of ſcripture with regard to us all: "Let us therefore fear, leſt a promiſe "being left us of entering into his reſt, any of you ſhould "ſeem to come ſhort of it."* Elſewhere, ſays the ſame apoſtle, "And we deſire that every one of you do ſhew the "ſame diligence, to the full aſſurance of hope unto the "end."†

The life of a Chriſtian is conſtantly repreſented in ſcripture as a life of vigilance and caution, of activity and diligence. "Be ſober and vigilant, for your adverſary "the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about ſeeking whom "he may devour."‡ The ſame apoſtle ſays, "And be-"ſides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, "and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, "and to temperance patience, and to patience godlineſs, "and to godlineſs brotherly kindneſs, and to brotherly "kindneſs charity; for if theſe things be in you and abound, "they make you that ye ſhall neither be barren nor un-"fruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.— "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make "your calling and election ſure."‖ I beg it may be obſerved, that this is no way contrary to that confidence in the divine mercy and good hope through grace, which the goſpel imparts to the believer.

Theſe are intended to animate him to diligence in duty, in dependance on divine ſtrength, and are themſelves gradually confirmed and improved, by producing their proper effects. Few ſeem to have enjoyed more of the conſolations of the goſpel than the apoſtle Paul; and yet he repreſents even the fear of final diſappointment, as what daily influenced his own conduct. "But I keep under my "body, and bring it into ſubjection, leſt that by any "means, when I have preached to others, I myſelf ſhould "be a caſt-away."*

I cannot help taking notice here, that there is often juſt cauſe to find fault even with perſons who, to all appear-

* Heb. iv. 1. † Heb. vi. 11. ‡ 1 Pet. v. 8. ‖ 2 Pet. i. 5—10.
* 1 Cor. ix. 27.

ance, are ſincerely pious upon this ſubject. For all ſuch I deſire to have the higheſt eſteem, and to treat them with the greateſt tenderneſs and affection. In the mean time, they ought to be willing, and even deſirous of having their miſtakes pointed out to them. Now I am perſuaded, there are many who ſeek after aſſurance of their own intereſt in God's favor in a wrong way, and that they often expect it in a degree that is not ſuited to the preſent ſtate.

1. They often ſeek it in a wrong way; they are ready to lay hold of impreſſions upon their minds; and, in a variety of particulars, are in danger of repeating the ſin of the Phariſees, who aſked a ſign from heaven. When a miniſter is ſpeaking or writing on this ſubject, they expect ſomething particular and perſonal; and, if I may ſpeak ſo, that he ſhould be in God's ſtead, and give them aſſurance, in place of telling them how they ought to ſeek it. But this eagerneſs, from however good a diſpoſition it may ſpring, is unwarranted and prepoſterous. We muſt be ſatisfied to walk in the way that God hath pointed out to us; to give thanks to him for the ſure foundation of a ſinner's hope which is laid in Zion, and to conclude the ſafety of our own ſtate from a ſerious and deliberate examination of ourſelves by the rules laid down in the holy ſcriptures. In this way only, is the moſt ſolid, ſettled, and laſting peace to be obtained.

Perhaps ſome will be ready to ſay, Do you then condemn in general all regard to impreſſions that may be ſenſibly felt upon the mind, or all ſecret and powerful ſuggeſtions of paſſages of ſcripture? Does the Holy Ghoſt the comforter never in this manner enlighten or refreſh thoſe ſouls in whom he dwells, according to his promiſe? "I "will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be "their God, and they ſhall be my people."* No, far from it; I have no deſign of denying the real operation or gracious preſence of the Spirit of God, which is certainly one of the moſt eſſential and one of the moſt comfortable doctrines of the "glorious goſpel; but at the ſame time,

* 2 Cor. vi. 16.

from the love I bear to it, I would guard it againſt miſtakes and abuſe. When any truth, or any paſſage, of ſcripture is ſuggeſted to the mind, which particularly and ſtrongly points out the duty proper to our preſent ſtate and circumſtances; when this is backed with a powerful ſenſe of its obligation, and by that means a deceitful or ſlothful heart is revived and quickened; this is thankfully to be acknowledged, and readily complied with. When a doubtful, dejected, or deſponding mind is relieved, by a ſtrong and affecting view of ſome encouraging promiſe or gracious invitation to the weary ſinner, or the contrite ſpirit; when, in ſuch a caſe, the mind is led to a diſcovery of the rich mercy and free grace of God to the guilty and miſerable, it ought to be embraced and improved; and in many ſuch inſtances, ſerious perſons harraſſed by temptation, have had cauſe to ſay with David, "I will bleſs the "Lord, who hath given me counſel; my reigns alſo in-"ſtruct me in the night ſeaſon."*

This is no more than the neceſſary conſequence of the conſtant over-ruling providence of God, which, as it extends to the diſpoſal and direction of the moſt minute circumſtances in the courſe of nature, cannot fail to be particularly exerciſed about the holineſs and peace of his own children. They obey what appears to be their duty, or an argument againſt ſin; they truſt the divine faithfulneſs in what concerns their comfort; and adore the divine wiſdom and goodneſs in the propriety and ſeaſonableneſs of either or both. But for any perſon, from the ſudden ſuggeſtion of a paſſage of ſcripture, ("I am thy God" for example; or, "I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine") without any examination of his temper and diſpoſition, to conclude the ſafety of his ſtate, is ſurely a piece of preſumption without ground.

Neither is it leſs fooliſh than preſumptuous; for all ſuch muſt be liable to be caſt down by other and contrary ſuggeſtions. We know very well, and have an inſtance of it in our Saviour's temptation, that ſatan can ſuggeſt paſſages of ſcripture; nay, and ſpeak pioufly and plauſibly

* Pſal. xvi. 7.

upon them: but their concluſions muſt be tried by other ſcriptures. To all who are inclined to the above deluding practice, I would ſay with the apoſtle John, "Beloved, "believe not every ſpirit, but try the ſpirits, whether "they are of God*." Or with the prophet Iſaiah, "To "the law and to the teſtimony, if they ſpeak not accord- "ing to this word, it is becauſe there is no light in "them†." There is alſo a very proper advice, mixed with caution, given by the ſame prophet, in the following words; "Who is among you that feareth the "Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his ſervant, that walk- "eth in darkneſs and hath no light; let him truſt in the "name of the Lord, and ſtay upon his God. Behold all "ye that kindle a fire, all that compaſs yourſelves about "with ſparks, walk in the light of your fires, and in the "ſparks that ye have kindled; this ſhall ye have of mine "hand, ye ſhall lie down in ſorrow‡."

2. I muſt alſo obſerve, that many ſerious perſons ſeem to deſire, and even to expect, aſſurance in ſuch a meaſure and degree, as is not ſuited to our preſent ſtate. They would have faith and hope to be the ſame with ſenſe. They would have heaven and earth to be the ſame, and would put on their crown before they have finiſhed their courſe. I am perſuaded, many deprive themſelves of that comfort to which they have an undoubted title, and which they might eaſily poſſeſs, by aiming at that which is beyond their reach. They do not remember, that it is true in this reſpect as well as in many others, what the apoſtle ſays, "Now we ſee through a glaſs darkly, but then face to face; "now I know in part, but then ſhall I know even as alſo "I am known‖." Would you but reflect upon yourſelves, Chriſtians, you would be aſhamed of your complaints. You would be aſhamed that you ſhould ſo much as lay claim to ſo high a degree of comfort, when you are ſo careleſs in your duty. Your improvement in the ſpiritual life is but very gradual, and therefore it is no wonder your hope ſhould be but in proportion to it.

* 1 John iv. 1. † If. viii. 20. ‡ If. l. 10 11. ‖ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

It is of the greateſt conſequence in religion, to diſtinguiſh careſully between that hope and comfort which ariſes directly from the promiſes of God in ſcripture, and that which ariſes from a reflex obſervation of the change that has taken place in our own temper and practice. To entertain and encourage doubts in the former caſe, is directly contrary both to our duty and intereſt; but in the other, perhaps ſuſpicion and diffidence is moſt becoming the Chriſtian temper, and moſt conducive to the advancement of the Chriſtian life. Is there any perſon peruſing this treatiſe, who is incommoded and diſtreſſed with anxiety and fear? Take heed that you be not doubting as much of the certainty of God's word, as you are jealous of your own ſtate. Is it not more than ſufficient that you have ſo many gracious invitations, ſo many full, free and unlimited offers of mercy, through a Redeemer, to the chief of ſinners? Does it not give repoſe to the mind, and reſt to the conſcience, when, by direct acts of faith, you receive and rely on Chriſt alone for ſalvation; ſeeing him to be ſingle in this undertaking, and all-ſufficient for its accompliſhment, and therefore cleaving to him as your Lord and your God, and your all. I would not chuſe to affirm, that aſſurance, in the ordinary ſenſe of that word, is eſſential to faith, or that its proper deſcription is, to believe that my ſins are forgiven me; yet ſurely, ſome meaſure of hope is inſeparable from it. Faith and deſpair are oppoſite and inconſiſtent. If you do really believe the ſincerity of the offer; if you do really believe the fulneſs and ability of the Saviour, "the God of hope will fill you "with all joy and peace in believing, through the power "of the Holy Ghoſt."

To this let me add, that conſidering the matter, even with regard to a renewing and ſanctifying work of the Spirit upon your hearts, your complaints are often exceſſive and unreaſonable. You would have evidence, not that the work is begun, but that it is finiſhed. You deſire comfort, not ſuch as is ſufficient to ſtrengthen you againſt temptation, and bear you up under ſuffering; but ſuch as would make temptation to be no temptation, and ſuffering to be no ſuffering. But if you are ſenſible that you ſtill

adhere to God as your portion, that you cannot find peace or reſt in any thing elſe; and that a whole world would not induce you to give up even your doubtful title to his favor and love, ſurely you ought to endeavor after compoſure of mind: you may be frequently in the ſtate of the apoſtle Paul, who ſays of himſelf, "Our fleſh had no reſt, "but we were troubled on every ſide, without were fight-"ings, within were fears*." And yet ſay with the ſame apoſtle, "We are troubled on every ſide, yet not diſtreſſed; "we are perplexed, but not in deſpair; perſecuted, but "not forſaken; caſt down, but not deſtroyed†." It is not meant by this to condemn an earneſt deſire to abound in hope, or a frequent and ſtrict examination of our ſtate and temper, but to warn Chriſtians againſt impatience, and againſt an unthankful, fretful diſpoſition, which indeed diſappoints itſelf, and prevents the attainment of that peace, for the want of which it complains.

This leads naturally to the mention of another fault incident to ſerious perſons, which will lay a foundation for a very important leſſon upon this ſubject. The fault here intended is, falling into a ſlothful, deſpondent neglect of duty. The devices of ſatan, our great enemy, are very various, and unſpeakably artful. When he cannot keep men in ſecurity, and drive them blindly along the broad path which leadeth to deſtruction, he endeavors to make their duty as painful and burdenſome to them as poſſible. When ſome perſons give themſelves to ſerious ſelf-examination, he embarraſſes them with ſcruples, he involves them in doubts, he diſtreſſes them with fears. This often brings on a relaxation, or ſuſpenſion of their diligence in duty; they give themſelves up to anxious, complaining thoughts; they ſtand ſtill, and will go no farther in religion, till they are ſatisfied whether they have as yet gone any length at all. But whatever good ground any perſon may have to be diſſatisfied with himſelf, ſo ſoon as he perceives that this is its effect, he ought to reſiſt it as a temptation. I cannot better illuſtrate this, than by a ſimilitude borrowed from the ſcripture language on the ſame

* 2 Cor. vii. 5. † 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9.

ſubject. Whether do you think that child moſt dutiful, under a ſenſe of his father's diſpleaſure, who patiently and ſilently applies himſelf to his work, or he who ſaunters about in idleneſs, and with peeviſh and ſullen complaints, is conſtantly calling in queſtion his father's love?

This lays the foundation for a very neceſſary and uſeful direction, which indeed flows naturally from all that has been ſaid on the evidence of regeneration. Endeavor, Chriſtians, to preſerve and increaſe your hope in God, by further degrees of ſanctification, by zeal and diligence in doing his will. The more the image of God in you is perfected, it will be the more eaſily diſcerned. If you are at any time ready to doubt whether ſuch or ſuch corruptions are conſiſtent with real religion; if you find this a hard queſtion to reſolve, go another way to work, and ſtrive by vigilance and prayer to mortify theſe corruptions, and then the difficulty is removed. If in a time of affliction and diſtreſs, you find it hard to determine whether it ought to be conſidered as the correction of a father, or the ſeverity of a judge, endeavor through divine grace to bear it with the patience of a child, and you will ſoon ſee its merciful original by its ſalutary effect. What ſhould be the daily ſtudy of a Chriſtian, but to mortify ſin in heart and converſation? and his comfort ſhould ariſe from his apparent ſucceſs in this important ſtrife. When grain of different kinds is but ſpringing from the ground, it is not eaſy to diſtinguiſh between one and another, but their growth aſcertains their quality, which is ſtill more fully diſcerned as they approach nearer to maturity. Imitate in this the great apoſtle of the Gentiles, "Not as though "I had already attained, either were already perfect; but "I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which al- "ſo I am apprehended of Chriſt Jeſus. Brethren, I count "not myſelf to have apprehended, but this one thing I "do, forgetting thoſe things which are behind, and reach- "ing forth unto thoſe things which are before, I preſs "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God "in Chriſt Jeſus*!"

* Phil. iii. 12. 13, 14.

Before closing this section, I must observe that though the account I have given of the great mark of real religion, may still leave some in the dark, yet surely it carries in it the clearest and plainest condemnation of many hearers of the gospel. Oh, that it were possible to fasten a conviction of it upon their minds! Are there not many who appear from sabbath to sabbath in the house of God, who dare not affirm seriously to their own hearts, that God and his service has more of their habitual settled affection than the world, or any of its enjoyments? I do not here understand gross sinners, whose crimes are "open going before "unto judgment; but I mean the more sober and regular professors of religion, who may have "a form of God-"liness, and deny the power thereof." I am persuaded this is a more proper trial of their state, than any particular rule of duty. Many such persons know so little of the extent and spirituality of the law of God, that it is not impossible they may be ready to affirm they do not allow themselves in any known sin, as the young man in the gospel seems to have answered sincerely, when he said to our Saviour, "Master, all these have I observed from my "youth*."

But I would farther ask them, Whether hath God or the world most of your love, most of your thoughts, and most of your care? Can such of you pretend this, whose eager, ardent, nightly thought and daily pleasure, is only to increase your substance? who would not go to market without re-examining your transactions, and computing your gain; but can daily go to the house of God, without observing, enquiring after, or desiring to see its proper fruits? Can such of you pretend this, to whom all serious conversation is tedious and disgustful, and the society of good men a painful restraint? to whom the sabbath is a dull, melancholy, and burdensome season? Oh, my brethren, let me beseech you to be faithful to your own souls. Your precious time is daily hastening on; the day of your merciful visitation is wearing fast away. Hear while there is yet peace, and intreat that God, for Christ's sake, would

* Mark x. 20.

freely pardon all your ſins; would renew you in the ſpirit of your minds; would fit you for his ſervice on earth, and for his preſence and enjoyment in heaven.

Thus I have explained at conſiderable length, and with all the care and accuracy in my power, the great and general evidence of regeneration, viz. the ſuperiority of the intereſt of God and the Redeemer in the heart, above the intereſt of inferior good. This, I hope, will be of uſe in itſelf, to diſtinguiſh the precious from the vile, to preſerve you from ſin, and excite you to diligence in every part of your duty, that it may be more and more manifeſt. At the ſame time, it will be of the greateſt ſervice, in the uſe and application of other ſigns of real religion, by ſhewing when they are concluſive, and when they are not.

CHAP. III.

Of the steps by which this change is accomplished.

WE proceed now to conſider by what ſteps, and by what means, this change is brought about. I am deeply ſenſible how difficult a part of the ſubject this is, and how hard it will be to treat of it in a diſtinct and preciſe, and at the ſame time, in a cautious and guarded manner. It is often complained of in thoſe who write on this ſubject, that they confine and limit the HOLY ONE, and that they give unneceſſary alarms to thoſe who have not had experience of every particular which they think proper to mention. There is no doubt but God acts in an* abſolute and ſovereign manner in the diſpenſation of his grace, as in every other part of his will. As he cannot be limited as to perſons, ſo neither as to the time and manner of their reformation. To this purpoſe, and in this preciſe meaning, our Saviour ſays, "The wind bloweth where it "liſteth, and thou heareſt the ſound thereof, but canſt not "tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: ſo is every "one that is born of the Spirit."†

Sometimes it pleaſeth God to ſnatch ſinners from the very brink of the pit, to raiſe up ſome of the moſt abandoned profligates, as trophies of his victorious grace and mercy; while he ſuffers others, far more moderate and decent, who are "not far from the kingdom of God," finally to fall ſhort of it. He ſometimes glorifies his power and

* It will be proper to inform the reader, that the word "abſolute" uſed here, and in ſome other places of this diſcourſe, is by no means to be underſtood as ſignifying the ſame thing with "arbitrary." He who acts arbitrarily, acts without any reaſon at all. To ſay this of the divine procedure, would be little leſs than blaſphemy. When we ſay that God acts "in an abſolute and ſovereign manner," the meaning is, that he acts upon the beſt and ſtrongeſt reaſons, and for the nobleſt and moſt excellent ends; but which are many or moſt of them beyond our reach and comprehenſion; and particularly, that there is not the leaſt foundation for ſuppoſing that the reaſons of preference are taken from comparative human merit.

† John iii. 8.

mercy at once, by converting his moſt inveterate enemies, and making them the moſt zealous, active, and ſucceſsful advocates for his cauſe. Such an inſtance was the apoſtle Paul, who from a perſecutor become a preacher. Sometimes converſion is ſpeedily and ſuddenly brought about, and the times and circumſtances of the change may be eaſily aſcertained. This was the caſe with the jailor recorded in the hiſtory of the Acts of the Apoſtles. The ſame may be ſaid of the apoſtle Paul; and there have been particular examples of it in every age. Sometimes, on the other hand, the reception of the truth, and renovation of the heart, goes on by ſlow and inſenſible degrees; nor is it eaſy to ſay by what means the change was begun, or at what time it was compleated. This was perhaps the caſe with moſt, if not all, the diſciples of our Lord, during his perſonal miniſtry.

Sometimes the change is very ſignal and ſenſible, the growth and improvement of the ſpiritual life ſpeedy and remarkable, the greateſt ſinners becoming the moſt eminent ſaints; like the woman mentioned in the goſpel, to whom many ſins were forgiven, and who loved her Redeemer much. Sometimes, on the other hand, the change is very doubtful, and the progreſs of the believer hardly diſcernible. Some of this ſort are reproved by the apoſtle Paul in the following words, which are but too applicable to many profeſſing Chriſtians of the preſent age: "For "when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need "that one teach you again, which be the firſt principles "of the oracles of God, and are become ſuch as have need "of milk, and not of ſtrong meat."*—Sometimes the convert hath much peace and ſenſible comfort, rejoicing with joy unſpeakable and full of glory; and ſometimes, on the other hand, he is diſtreſſed with doubts and fears, and made to walk in darkneſs. Once more, ſome ſinners are brought in by deep and long humiliation, and are almoſt diſtracted with legal terrors, while others are powerfully, though ſweetly, conſtrained by the cords of divine love. All theſe "worketh the ſelf ſame ſpirit, who divi-

* Heb. v. 12.

"deth to every man ſeverally as he will." I deſire, that what has now been ſaid, may be ſtill kept in mind; ſo that if the evidences of a ſaving change can be produced, there need be little ſolicitude about the time or manner of its being wrought.

What I propoſe to offer on this part of the ſubject, is not to be conſidered as in the leaſt degree contrary to, or inconſiſtent with, theſe truths. Nay, I am not to lay down a plan and ſay, this is the ordinary way in which ſinners are brought to the ſaving knowledge of God, leaving it to him, in ſome few, uncommon, and extraordinary caſes, to take ſovereign ſteps, and admit exceptions from the ordinary rules. This is a way of ſpeaking common enough; but though it may be very well meant, I apprehend it hath not in it much, either of truth or utility. The ſalvation of every child of Adam is of free, abſolute, ſovereign grace: and the actual change may be wrought at any time, in any manner, by any means, and will produce its effects in any meaſure, that to infinite wiſdom ſhall ſeem proper. Neither ought we to pretend to account for the diverſity in any other manner than our Saviour does: "Even ſo, Father, "for ſo it ſeemed good in thy ſight."* Therefore what I have in view, is to ſpeak of ſuch ſteps in the change as are, in ſubſtance at leaſt, common to all true converts. It will be a ſort of analyſis, or more full explication of the change itſelf, and ſerve, among other uſes, further to diſtinguiſh the real from the counterfeit. Too much can hardly be ſaid on this ſubject: "For what is the chaff to the wheat? "ſaith the Lord." It will alſo illuſtrate the divine wiſdom, as well as ſovereignty, by ſhowing how that diverſity of operation, ſo remarkable in different ſubjects, produces in all at laſt the ſame bleſſed effect.

SECT. I.

There must be a discovery of the real nature of God.

IN the firſt place, one important and neceſſary ſtep in bringing about a ſaving change, is that the ſinner get

* Luke x. 21.

a diſcovery of the real nature, the infinite majeſty, and tranſcendent glory of the living God! Perhaps ſome will be ſurpriſed, that, as uſual, a conviction of ſin is not mentioned firſt, as the preliminary ſtep. I enter into no quarrel or debate with thoſe who do ſo; but I have firſt mentioned the other, which is but ſeldom taken notice of, from a firm perſuaſion, that a diſcovery of the nature and glory of the true God lies at the foundation of all. This alone can produce ſalutary convictions of ſin; for how can we know what ſin is, till we know him againſt whom we have ſinned. The ſame thing only will point out the difference between real conviction, and ſuch occaſional fears as never go farther than a ſpirit of bondage.

In ſupport of this, you may obſerve, that in ſcripture, thoſe who are in a natural or unconverted ſtate, are often deſcribed as lying in a ſtate of ignorance or darkneſs. They are ſaid to be ſuch as know not God: "Howbeit then "when ye knew not God, ye did ſervice unto them which "by nature are no gods."* See alſo the following deſcription: "Having the underſtanding darkened, being "alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance "that is in them, becauſe of the blindneſs of their hearts."† Agreeably to this, the change produced in them is repreſented as giving them light or underſtanding, in oppoſition to their former ignorance; "to open their eyes, and "to turn them from darkneſs to light, and from the power "of Satan unto God.‡ But if our goſpel be hid, it is hid "to them that are loſt, in whom the god of this world hath "blinded the minds of them which believe not, leſt the "light of the glorious goſpel of Chriſt, who is the image "of God, ſhould ſhine unto them. For God, who com-"manded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs, hath ſhined "in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the "glory of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt."‖ In this way is the matter repreſented in ſcripture, much more frequently than is commonly obſerved; and, as the underſtanding is the leading faculty in our nature, it is but reaſonable to ſuppoſe that the change ſhould begin there, by

* Gal. iv. 8. † Eph. iv. 18. ‡ Acts xxvi. 18. ‖ 2 Cor. iv. 4, 6.

a diſcovery of the nature and glory of God, as the foundation of all that is afterwards to follow.

This will be further evident, if we reflect upon the account formerly given, and ſufficiently ſupported from the holy ſcriptures, of the nature of this change, That it conſiſts in a ſupreme regard to the glory of God, and an habitual prevailing deſire of his favor. To this it is abſolutely neceſſary, as a preliminary, that there be a diſcovery of the real nature and tranſcendent glory of God. How can any man have that as the chief and leading motive of action which he doth not underſtand? How can any man have that as the ſupreme object of deſire, which he doth not know? Neither of theſe is poſſible; there muſt, therefore, be ſome ſuch diſcovery as I have mentioned above. It is true, this is but imperfect at firſt; there will be in the truly regenerate a growing diſcovery of the glory of God, as well as a growing delight in him, as its conſequence: yet there muſt be ſome view of his nature, as the beginning of the change, and the ground-work of every holy diſpoſition.

This diſcovery of God implies two things, which, as they are both neceſſary, ſo they deſerve our particular attention; and it is not improper to diſtinguiſh carefully the one from the other. 1. It muſt be a diſcovery of his real nature. 2. A diſcovery of the worth and excellence of his nature, which is, properly ſpeaking, the glory of God.

1. It muſt be a diſcovery of the real nature of God. He muſt be ſeen to be juſt ſuch a Being as he really is, and no falſe or adulterated image muſt be placed in his room, or adored in his ſtead. He muſt be ſeen in his ſpiritual nature, as almighty in his power, unſearchable in his wiſdom, inviolable in his truth; but, above all, he muſt be ſeen as infinite in his holineſs and hatred of ſin, as impartial in his juſtice, and determined to puniſh it. Such is the ſcripture repreſentation of God, as "glorious in his ho-"lineſs.—Evil cannot dwell with him, and ſinners can-"not ſtand in his preſence." It is the error of the wicked to ſuppoſe the contrary; and, indeed, it is the very

ſource of wickedneſs to deny the being, or to deny the holineſs of God; and theſe amount much to the ſame thing. "Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God; he hath ſaid "in his heart thou wilt not require it.*—The fool hath "ſaid in his heart there is no God.†—Theſe things thou "haſt done, and I kept ſilence; thou thoughteſt that I was "altogether ſuch an one as thyſelf, but I will reprove thee, "and ſet them in order before thine eyes."‡

God muſt be ſeen as he is repreſented in his own word, which is the only rule of faith, the pillar and ground of truth. This is a matter of the greateſt importance, which, I am ſorry to ſay, is in this age very ſeldom attended to, but which is moſt manifeſtly and undeniably juſt. If God is not ſeen in his real nature, as he is in truth, he can never be acceptably ſerved. If a wrong or falſe character of God is formed, no worſhip we can offer to him, no love or reſpect we can bear to him is genuine; or rather, to ſpeak more properly, our ſervice and attachment is, in that caſe, wholly miſplaced, and not directed to him at all, but ſomething elſe is loved, honored, and ſerved in his room. I beſeech the ſerious reader to obſerve, what an unſpeakable jealouſy God diſcovered under the Old Teſtament diſpenſation, as to the purity of his worſhip, and what a heinous crime all idolatry was eſteemed. How great was the divine diſpleaſure at the making and worſhipping the golden calf, although it is very probable Aaron only intended to repreſent the true God, by the ſame ſymbol they had ſeen in Egypt? Did not this belong to the ſubſtance, and not only to the circumſtances of religion? Is it not then equally intereſting under the New Teſtament as under the Old? Was the unchangeable God ſo much diſpleaſed at giving him a falſe name, and will he not be equally diſpleaſed with thoſe who attribute to him a falſe nature?

As this truth ſerves to explain the nature and riſe of regeneration, ſo it alſo receives particular light and evidence itſelf from what has been ſaid in the preceding parts of this ſubject. Regeneration conſiſts in having the image of God again drawn upon the heart; that is, its being car-

* Pſal. x. 13 † Pſal. xiv. 1. ‡ Pſal. l. 21.

ried out to the ſupreme love of God, and delight in him or, in other words, brought to the ſupreme love of, and delight in, perfect goodneſs and immaculate holineſs. When this is the caſe, the ſinner is renewed, he again bears the image of God, which he had loſt, he is again fitted for the preſence of God, from which he had been expelled. But if he has wrong notions of God, if he takes him to be eſſentially different from what he really is, he ſerves not the true God at all, he bears not his image, he delights not in his fellowſhip, he is unfit for his preſence. If religion conſiſts in a divine nature, ſuch a perſon does not poſſeſs it, unleſs there are more Gods than one. There may, indeed, be an alteration in him, he may have transferred his allegiance, and changed his maſter, for idols are many, but he is not brought unto God; and, ſo long as God is immutable, his happineſs is impoſſible.

I can recollect nothing that is worth notice as an objection againſt this, but that our knowledge of God, at any rate, is extremely imperfect and defective. It is ſo to be ſure, while we are in this world; nay, probably, it will be ſo to all eternity: for "who can by ſearching find out "God? Who can find out the Almighty unto perfection? "It is high as heaven, what can we do? deeper than hell, "what can we know? The meaſure thereof is longer than "the earth, and broader than the ſea."* But there is a great difference between the imperfection of our knowledge of God, and forming conceptions of him that are fundamentally wrong. There is a great difference between having weak and inadequate ideas of the truth, and believing or acting upon the oppoſite falſhood. Unleſs this is admitted, we ſhall never ſee the unſpeakable advantage which the Jews enjoyed over the Gentiles, "becauſe to "them were committed the oracles of God;" nor indeed ſhall we ſee the worth and beauty of the ancient diſpenſation in general. It was one uniform diſplay of this great and important truth, which is delivered with ſo much majeſty by God himſelf: "I am the Lord, that is my name, "and my glory will I not give to another, neither my

* Job xi. 7, 8, 9.

" praiſe to graven images." Neither is this at all relaxed under the New Teſtament. The importance of " holding " the truth as it is in Jeſus"—of " holding faſt the form " of ſound words"—and " keeping the truth," is often declared, as well as that " no lie is of the truth." And no wonder that in this pure and ſpiritual conſtitution, it ſhould be neceſſary to have clear and diſtinct views of him who is " the Father of ſpirits."

Thus I hope it appears, that, in order to a ſaving change, there muſt be a diſcovery of the real nature of the one only, the living and true God. Before we proceed further, let me obſerve that hence may be ſeen, in the cleareſt light, the danger both of ignorance, and error.

1. Of ignorance. It is plain that thoſe who are groſsly ignorant muſt be unrenewed. Thoſe who do not know God, cannot poſſibly love him. Do you not now ſee the meaning and weight of the ſtrong language of ſcripture, where we are told the heathen nations were ſitting " in " darkneſs, and in the region and ſhadow of death?" What force ſhould this give to the prayers ſo often offered up, both in public and in private, that the " name" of God may be " hallowed," and his kingdom come? How much ſhould it add to the zeal and diligence, eſpecially of thoſe who are appointed to watch for the ſouls of others? What concern ſhould it give them, leſt any under their immediate inſpection " ſhould periſh for lack of knowledge." It is indeed ſurpriſing to think, what groſs ignorance prevails at preſent among many, notwithſtanding the excellent opportunities of inſtruction which they have in their offer. Nay, even among thoſe who are inſtructed in ſeveral branches of human ſcience, it is aſtoniſhing to think what ignorance there is of every thing that relates to religion.

If accident or curioſity has brought this diſcourſe into the hands of any ſuch, let me intreat their attention for a little. I beſeech you to think upon, and tremble at your ſtate. You may have ſome ſort of a nominal belief of an unſeen, unintelligible being, called God, while you know neither " what you ſpeak, nor whereof you affirm." You may perhaps have heard, or rather in our happy native country you cannot but have heard of Chriſt Jeſus, the Son

of God, ſtiled often the Savior of ſinners; but you "know "neither the Father nor the Son." You know not God as Creator, nor, by conſequence, your obligations and duty to him, or your apoſtacy and departure from both. You know not what ſin is, and therefore, you cannot know a Saviour. If ever you come to true religion at all, light will break in upon you in your darkneſs, you will no more be able to forget God, he will follow you into your ſecret chambers, he will come home upon you, and aſſault you, as it were, with the reality of his preſence, with the ſanctity and purity of his nature, and the terrible majeſty of his power. O how great is the effect of a real diſcovery of the divine glory, whether in the word, or by the providence of God; to a ſaint or to a ſinner. Hear how Job expreſſes himſelf, "I have heard of thee by the hearing "of the ear, but now mine eye ſeeth thee, wherefore I ab- "hor myſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes."* We have the ſame thing well deſcribed by the prophet Iſaiah, as the effect of divine power in deſolating judgments. "Enter "into the rock, and hide thee in the duſt, for the fear of "the Lord, and for the glory of his majeſty. The lofty "looks of man ſhall be humbled, and the haughtineſs of "men ſhall be bowed down, and the Lord alone ſhall be "exalted in that day.—And they ſhall go into the holes "of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the "Lord, and for the glory of his majeſty, when he ariſeth to "ſhake terribly the earth. In that day a man ſhall caſt his "idols of ſilver, and his idols of gold, which they made "each one for himſelf to worſhip, to the moles and to the "bats, to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops "of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of "his majeſty, when he ariſeth to ſhake terribly the earth."† "So ſoon as it pleaſes God to open your eyes upon himſelf, with whom you have to do, it will humble you in the duſt, it will diſcover your danger, it will make redemption precious to you, and the name of a Saviour unſpeakably dear."

* Job xlii. 5, 6. † Iſaiah ii. 10, 11, 19, 20, 21.

2. The ſame thing ſhews the danger of error, as well as ignorance. Among many looſe and pernicious principles, which are zealouſly ſpread, and blindly embraced in this age, one of the moſt prevailing and dangerous is, the innocence of error. "O, ſay ſome, every man is "to enquire freely, and each will embrace what appears "to him to be the truth. It is no matter what a man be- "lieves, if his life be good. Even he who miſtakes, "may be as acceptable to God as his oppoſite, if he is "equally ſincere." Now there is no doubt, that liberty to enquire freely, is an ineſtimable bleſſing, and impartiality in religious enquiries an indiſpenſible duty. But the above maxim becomes falſe and dangerous by being carried an exceſſive length; and it is carried to this exceſs by the favor of two ſuppoſitions, which are falſe and groundleſs. The maxim is applied frequently to juſtify an open and virulent oppoſition to the moſt important truths of the goſpel; nay, ſometimes, even a denial of all religion, natural and revealed. To be able to apply it thus, it is neceſſary to ſuppoſe that falſe opinions will have as good an influence upon the heart as true. If this is the caſe, the boaſted privilege of free enquiry is not worth having, and all the labor beſtowed on the ſearch of truth is entirely thrown away. Another ſuppoſition contained in the above maxim is, that a perſon may be as ſincere in embracing groſs falſhoods, as in adhering to the truth. If this be true, our Creator hath not given us the means to diſtinguiſh the one from the other, which is the higheſt impeachment both of his wiſdom and goodneſs.

Such perſons do not conſider, that a corrupt inclination in the heart brings a bias on the judgment, and that when men do not "like to retain God in their knowledge," he frequently in his righteous judgment, gives them up to a reprobate mind. Nay, when they reject his truth from an inward hatred of its purity, he is ſaid to ſend them "ſtrong deluſions," as in the following paſſage: "Be- "cauſe they received not the love of the truth, that they "might be ſaved, for this cauſe God ſhall ſend them "ſtrong deluſion, that they ſhould believe a lie, that they "all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had

" pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs*." But the nature of regeneration will ſerve, in a peculiar manner, to ſhew the danger of error. If men form wrong notions of God, if they love and worſhip, and reſemble a falſe God, they cannot be renewed, they are not like, and therefore unfit for the preſence of, the true. Be not deceived, he cannot deny himſelf, and therefore " there is no fellowſhip of " righteouſneſs with unrighteouſneſs, no communion of " light with darkneſs, no concord of Chriſt with Belial†."

I muſt here, to prevent miſtakes, obſerve that this ought, by no means, to be extended to differences of ſmaller moment, under which I rank all thoſe which regard only the externals of religion. I am fully convinced, that many of very different parties and denominations are building upon the one " foundation laid in Zion" for a ſinner's hope, and that their diſtance and alienation from one another in affection, is very much to be regretted. Many will not meet together on earth for the worſhip of God, who ſhall have but one temple, where all the faithful, " from the eaſt, and from the weſt, from the north, and " from the ſouth, ſhall ſit down with Abraham, and Iſaac, " and Jacob, in the kingdom of their" eternal " Father." But after all, I muſt needs alſo believe, that it is poſſible to make ſhipwreck of the faith. This appears plainly from the following, as well as many other paſſages of ſcripture: " But there were falſe prophets alſo among the " people, even as there ſhall be falſe teachers among you, " who privily ſhall bring in damnable hereſies, even de- " nying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon " themſelves ſwift deſtruction‡." If any take up falſe notions of God, or expect ſanctification and eternal life in any other way than he hath pointed out in his word, though they may now build their hope on a fond imagination that he is ſuch an one as themſelves, they ſhall at laſt meet with a dreadful diſappointment in this awful ſentence, " Depart from me, I know ye not, ye workers of iniquity."

* 2 Theſſ. ii. 10, 11, 12. † 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15. ‡ 2 Pet. ii. 1.

SECT. II.

There must be a discovery of the infinite glory of God.

IN the second place, As there must be a discovery of the real nature, so also of the infinite glory of God. He must not only be seen to be just such a being as he really is, but there must be a sense of the infinite worth, beauty, and perfection of his character. These two things, though intimately connected, are yet so distinct from one another, as to deserve to be separately considered. The first is necessary, but it is not sufficient alone, or by itself. There can be no true religion, unless there be a discovery of the real nature of God. But though there be a knowledge of what God is, unless there be also a discovery of the excellence and glory of this nature, he can never be the object of esteem and love. It is one thing to know, and another to approve; and, whilst this last is not the case, whatever we may know or affirm, or be persuaded of, with relation to the Supreme Being, we do not know him to be God, nor can possibly glorify him as God. This momentous truth we may surely comprehend, by what is analogous to it in our experience, between created natures. Speculative knowledge and love are by no means inseparable. Men may truly know many things which they sincerely hate; they may hate them even because they know them: and when this is the case, the more they know them they will hate them with the greater virulence and rancor. This not only may, but always must take place, when natures are opposite one to another, the one sinful, for example, and the other holy. The more they are known, the more is their mutual hatred stirred up, and their perfect opposition to each other becomes, if not more violent, at least more sensible.

We have little reason to doubt, that the fallen angels, those apostate spirits, have a great degree of speculative knowledge. I would not, indeed, take upon me to affirm that they are free from error and mistake of every kind, yet it seems highly probable that they have a clear, though, at the same time, a terrible apprehension of

"what" God is; for they have not the ſame opportunities, or the ſame means of deceiving themſelves, that we have in the preſent ſtate. But do they love him, or ſee his excellence and glory? Very far from it. They believe and tremble; they know God, and blaſpheme. The more they know of him, the more they hate him; that is to ſay, their inward, native, habitual hatred is the more ſtrongly excited, and the more ſenſibly felt.

The caſe is much the ſame with ſome ſinners, when firſt awakened, and it continues to be the ſame ſo long as they are kept in bondage and terror. They have an awful view of the holineſs of God's nature, of the ſtrictneſs of his law, and the greatneſs of his power. This is directly levelled againſt their own corrupt inclinations, and carries nothing with it but a ſentence of condemnation againſt them: "Curſed is every one that continueth not "in all things which are written in the book of the law, to "do them*." This brings forth their enmity, which before perhaps lay hid. It is remarkable that ſome perſons of looſe and diſorderly lives, will ſometimes maintain, at ſtated ſeaſons, a profeſſion of piety. So long as they can keep their conſciences ſtill and quiet by general indiſtinct notions of God, as very eaſy and gentle, no way inclined to puniſh, they think of him without averſion, nay, will go through ſome outward forms with apparent ſatisfaction and delight. Their notion of divine mercy is not a readineſs to pardon the greateſt ſinner on repentance, but a diſpoſition to indulge the ſinner, and wink at his continuance in tranſgreſſion. No ſooner are ſuch perſons brought to a diſcovery of the real character of a holy God, than their thoughts of him are entirely changed. They have gloomy views of his nature, and harſh thoughts of his providence; they fret at the ſtrictneſs of his law, and, as far as they dare, complain of the tyranny of his government. Their ſentiments are the ſame with thoſe expreſſed by the men of Bethſhemeſh: "Who is able to ſtand before this "holy Lord God, and to whom ſhall he go up from "us†."

* Gal. iii. 10. † 1 Sam. vi. 20.

I cannot help obſerving, that here we are, if I may ſpeak ſo, at the very fountain-head of error. What is it elſe that makes many frame to themſelves new and flattering ſchemes of religion, that makes them imagine a God ſo extremely different from that holy Being he is repreſented in his own word? When men will not conform their practice to the principles of pure and undefiled religion, they ſcarce ever fail to endeavor to accommodate religion to their own practice. Are there not many who cannot endure the repreſentation of God as holy and jealous, which is given us in ſcripture? With what violence do they oppoſe themſelves to it by carnal reaſonings, and give it the moſt odious and abominable names? The reaſon is plain. Such a view of God ſets the oppoſition of their own hearts to him in the ſtrongeſt light. Two things oppoſite in their nature cannot be approved at once, and, therefore, the conſequence is, God or themſelves muſt be held in abhorrence. But we have reaſon to bleſs God, that their reſiſtance to the truth is only a new evidence and illuſtration of it, ſhewing that "the carnal "mind is enmity againſt God; for it is not ſubject to the "law of God, neither indeed can be*." And as this enmity to God diſcovers itſelf in oppoſition to his truth on earth, it will become much more violent, when further reſiſtance is impoſſible. When an unregenerate ſinner enters upon a world of ſpirits, where he has a much clearer ſight and greater ſenſe of what God is, his inherent enmity works to perfection, and he blaſphemes like thoſe devils with whom he muſt forever dwell.

From all this it will evidently appear, that there muſt be a diſcovery of the glory and beauty of the divine nature, an entire approbation of every thing in God, as perfectly right and abſolutely faultleſs. It is ſelf-evident, that without this, there cannot be a ſupreme love to God, in which true religion properly conſiſts; no man can love that which doth not appear to be lovely. But I further add, that this is abſolutely neceſſary to the very beginning of the change, or the foundation on which it is built. It

* Rom. viii. 7.

is neceſſary, in order to any genuine, ſalutary convictions of ſin. What is it elſe but a diſcovery of the ſpotleſs holineſs, the perfect excellence, and infinite amiableneſs of the divine nature, that humbles a ſinner under a ſenſe of his breaches of the divine law? Without this, there may be a ſenſe of weakneſs and ſubjection, but never a ſenſe of duty and obligation. Without this there may be a fear of wrath, but there cannot be a hatred of ſin.

This ſeems directly to lead to the next great ſtep in a ſaving change, viz. a conviction of ſin and miſery. But before we proceed to point out the progreſs of conviction, it will not be improper to take notice of a few truths which reſult from what hath been already ſaid. This is the more neceſſary, that erroneous or defective views of religion are commonly occaſioned by ſome miſtake in the foundation.

1. The neceſſity of regeneration itſelf appears with peculiar force, from what hath been ſaid on this part of the ſubject. There muſt be a real inward change of heart, before there can be any true religion. If the moral excellence of the divine nature muſt be diſcovered, if God muſt be ſeen as glorious in his holineſs, the heart and temper muſt be changed as well as the life. Nothing is more plain from the holy ſcriptures, than that "the natu-" ral man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God;" and it is equally plain from experience and the nature of the thing. While men continue in the love of ſin, it is impoſſible that they ſhould ſee the beauty of infinite holineſs. So long as they love ſin, they muſt hate holineſs, which is its oppoſite, and not leſs contrary to it than light is to darkneſs. Therefore, all reſtraint upon our outward converſation, all zeal and diligence in expenſive rites and ceremonies; all duties of whatever kind that ariſe from fear, or other external motives, are of no conſequence, till the temper and inclination of the heart is entirely renewed.

2. From what hath been ſaid, we may plainly perceive, that regeneration from firſt to laſt muſt be aſcribed to the agency of the Holy Ghoſt. It muſt be the effect of divine grace, and the work of ſovereign power. Let not

any creature be unwilling to ſtand indebted for his new creation to the Author of his firſt being; "for of him, "and through him, and to him, are all things*." While man is in his natural ſtate, he is an enemy to God in his mind by wicked works. The diſcoveries that are made to him of the real nature of God in his works and in his word, while he continues in this diſpoſition, are not amiable but hateful. Nay, he is ſo far from loving him as his father, that he fears him as his enemy. This fear will diſcover itſelf one of theſe two ways. Sometimes it will make the ſinner fly from God, caſt inſtruction behind his back, and increaſe unto more ungodlineſs, till natural conſcience is ſeared and inſenſible. How many there are of this kind, whom one crime only precipitates into another, experience is a melancholy proof. It is worth while at the ſame time to obſerve what intimations are given us in ſcripture, that this is the firſt and natural effect of ſin upon all, to drive them at a further diſtance from God. Two inſtances of this have been given above. Our firſt parents no ſooner ſinned, than they fled and hid themſelves when they heard God's voice in the garden, as impatient of his approach. A ſimilar reflection we ſee in the apoſtle Peter, on being witneſs to an extraordinary effect of his Saviour's divine power: "And when Simon Peter "ſaw it, he fell down at Jeſus' knees, ſaying, Depart "from me, for I am a ſinful man, O Lord†." See another inſtance of the ſame kind. "And the whole multi- "tude of the country of the Gadarenes round about, be- "ſought him to depart from them, for they were taken "with great fear.‡"

Another common effect of this natural fear, in ſome reſpects contrary to the former, is to diſpoſe men to perform ſome conſtrained and hypocritical ſervices, in order to avoid puniſhment. This is deſcribed in the temper and conduct of the children of Iſrael, as repreſented by the Pſalmiſt; "When he ſlew them, then they ſought him; "they returned, and enquired early after God. And "they remembered that God was their rock, and the high

* Rom. xi. 36. † Luke v. 8. ‡ Luke viii. 37.

"God their redeemer. Nevertherleſs they did flatter him "with their mouth, they lied unto him with their tongues; "for their heart was not right with him, neither were they "ſtedfaſt in his covenant."* Hence it appears, that to a diſcovery of the glory and excellence that is in God, it is neceſſary that we be in ſome meaſure changed into the ſame image. To ſay that this is the effect of our own attempts and endeavors in the way of duty, without the conſtraining power of divine grace, is, when thoroughly examined, a manifeſt contradiction. If perſons endeavor to force or oblige themſelves to love any one, it is a ſure ſign that he is very unlovely in their eyes. Love cannot be forced, or rather to ſpeak more properly, forced love is not love at all. In a word, it is our indiſpenſible duty to attend to every dictate of conſcience, and to follow it ſo far as it goes; but I cannot help thinking, that for a ſinner truly and ſincerely to deſire a change of nature, would be an evidence of a change begun. Therefore, till a ſinner get a ſupernatural illumination, he can never ſee the glory and beauty of the divine character. Before this, he may ſeek to propitiate God's favor, he may wiſh to avoid his wrath; he may deſire a change in God for his own ſafety, but he cannot be ſatisfied with him as he really is. It muſt be the ſame almighty power, which brought the world out of nothing into being, that muſt bring back the ſinner from his rebellion and apoſtacy, according to that promiſe, evidently applicable to the Saviour; "Thy people ſhall be "willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of ho-"lineſs."† Neither is the ſame thing leſs clearly aſſerted in the New Teſtament; "For it is God which worketh "in you, both to will and to do of his good pleaſure."‡

3. Hence we may ſee wherein lies the fundamental eſſential difference between common or imperfect convictions, and the effectual ſanctifying and ſaving influences of the Holy Ghoſt. The firſt ariſe from a view of the natural perfections of God, from a belief of his power and ſeverity, without any diſcovery of his righteouſneſs and glory. Therefore, however great a length they may pro-

* Pſ. lxxviii. 34, 35, 36, 37. † Pſ. cx. 3. ‡ Phil. ii. 13.

ceed, however different or oppoſite their effects may be, they never produce any real change in the heart. It is of great conſequence to attend to this important diſtinction; for though imperfect convictions ſometimes are entirely effaced, and are followed by no laſting effect at all, yet it is often otherwiſe. They frequently produce a counterfeit religion, which not only continues for a time, but is carried down by ſome to the grave as a lie in their right-hand. So ſubtle are the deceits of ſatan, that there are many hollow forms of religion, not only upon a legal, but an evangelical bottom. I ſhall give the reader a ſketch of the principles and outlines of both.

There are ſome legal hypocrites. Awakened to a ſenſe of their danger merely from the irreſiſtable power of God, they fall to the exerciſe of repentance, and hope that by ſo doing they may live. Hence the whole ſyſtem of bodily penance and mortification. Hence alſo ſo ſtrong an attachment, in ſome worldly perſons, to the external forms of religion, and veneration for the places of divine worſhip. Being now ſomewhat more regular and decent in their ordinary carriage than before, they entertain a fond hope that all ſhall be well. In the mean time, they are ſo far from being reſtored to the image of God, or being governed by his love, that all this is a burden to them; and indeed it is becauſe it is a burden, that they are ſo prone to think it meritorious. Conſcience checks them, and they dare not run to the ſame exceſs with others, or even repeat what they themſelves did formerly; and by this compariſon, cannot help thinking they are in a hopeful way. But did ſuch perſons reflect a little on the nature of God, they would ſee their error. They would learn, that they are ſo far from being renewed in the ſpirit of their minds, that whatever lengths they go, they are dragged or driven againſt their will; and whenever they can find a plauſible excuſe, they are ready to withdraw their neck from the yoke. A juſt view of the glory of God, and the obligation upon every rational creature to love and imitate him, would effectually cure them of all ſelf-righteouſneſs and ſelf-dependance; would lead them to himſelf and the grace treaſured up in his Son, to "work in them the

" whole good pleaſure of his goodneſs, and the work of " faith with power."

On the other hand, there are evangelical hypocrites. Theſe begin upon the ſame principles, and their views have the ſame radical defect with the former. They are awakened to a ſenſe of danger, and ſometimes made to tremble through fear of divine judgments, but without any diſcovery of the glory and amiableneſs of the divine nature. If ſuch perſons happen to live in a family or congregation, where they hear much of the doctrine of redemption, it may have its place in their ſcheme. They may be ſo convinced of their own manifold tranſgreſſions, as to be ſatisfied to throw their guilt upon the ſurety, and rely on the ſufferings and death of Chriſt, for deliverance from the wrath of an offended God. Nay, I have not the leaſt doubt that ſome may, by a confident preſumption, imitate the faith of God's elect, and believe that Chriſt died for themſelves in particular. So long as this perſuaſion can maintain its ground, it may, and muſt give them great joy and ſatisfaction. Who would not find conſolation in thinking themſelves in ſafety from divine wrath? Yet all this while they never ſee the evil of ſin in itſelf, as an oppoſition to the nature, and a breach of the law of God. They are never brought to love an infinitely holy God in ſincerity of heart. They may love him, becauſe they ſuppoſe themſelves the peculiar objects of his love, with ſome obſcure, confuſed, ſenſual idea of the delights of heaven; but they know not or conſider not, the nature of that ſalvation he hath provided for his choſen.

All ſuch love, it is plain, ariſeth from a falſe confidence in their own ſtate, and not from a true knowledge of God. Their notions of God's love to them contain more of a partial indulgence to them as they are, than of his infinite compaſſion in forgiving what they have been. The effects of ſuch religion are juſt what might be expected from its nature, violent and paſſionate for a ſeaſon, and commonly oſtentatious, but temporary and changeable. Self-love lies at the root, and therefore, while they are pleaſed and gratified, they will continue their profeſſion of attachment; but when ſelf-denial or bearing the croſs is re-

quired, they reject the terms, they lose their transporting views, and return to their sins.

There are many examples of this, not only in scripture, but in the history of the church in every age. Many of those disciples who seemed gladly to embrace the doctrine, and highly to honor the person of Christ, when they heard some of the most mortifying precepts, "went "back and walked no more with him*." The character is little different, which we find described under the image of the stony ground hearers, who "having not root in "themselves, when persecution or tribulation arose be- "cause of the word, by and by were offended." I hope this, with the explication above given of its cause, may be of use to account for some appearances in a time of the revival of religion. Persons who seem to have the same exercises with real converts, yet afterwards fall away, and "return with the dog to his vomit again, and with the sow "that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire." This gives occasion to adversaries to speak reproachfully, and is greatly distressing to those who truly fear God. But would men carefully attend to what the holy scriptures teach us to expect, their surprise in all such cases would cease. "For it must needs be that offences must come†." And though there are many counterfeits, there will still be sufficient means to distinguish the gold from the dross.

SECT. III.

There must be a conviction of sin and danger.

THE next great step in a saving change, is a deep humiliation of mind, and conviction of sin and danger. The absolute necessity of this is very evident, and indeed generally confessed. It is equally evident, whether we consider the nature of the change itself, the means of its production, or the motives to all future duty. If an entire change is necessary, there must be an entire and thorough dissatisfaction with, and disapprobation of, our

* John vi. 66. † Matt. xviii. 7.

paſt character and ſtate. Whoever is pleaſed with his preſent character, will neither deſire, endeavor, nor even accept of a change. If we conſider the means of our recovery, by Jeſus Chriſt ſuffering in the room of ſinners, the ſame thing will appear with increaſing evidence. Thoſe who are not humbled under a ſenſe of guilt and corruption, will treat with great contempt a purchaſed pardon and a crucified Saviour. This our Lord himſelf often tells us in the plaineſt terms. "They that are "whole need not a phyſician, but they that are ſick. I "came not to call the righteous, but ſinners to repent-"ance."* To theſe indeed his invitation and call is particularly addreſſed: "Come unto me, all ye that labor, "and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt."†

To the ſame purpoſe, we ſhall find many other paſſages, both of the prophetic and apoſtolic writings. The glad tidings of ſalvation are always directed to the humble, miſerable, broken-hearted, thirſty, periſhing ſoul. Thus in the prophet Iſaiah, "Ho, every one that thirſt-"eth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, "come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk, "without money and without price."‡ When Chriſt entered on his perſonal miniſtry, he opened his commiſſion in the following terms. "The ſpirit of the Lord is "upon me, becauſe he hath anointed me to preach the "goſpel to the poor; he hath ſent me to heal the broken-"hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and re-"covering of ſight to the blind; to ſet at liberty them that "are bruiſed, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."‖ I ſhall only mention one other paſſage: "And I will give "to him that is athirſt of the fountain of the water of life "freely."*

From theſe paſſages, and many others in the ſame ſtrain, it is evident beyond contradiction, that there muſt be a deep humiliation of mind, and ſenſe of guilt and wretchedneſs, before a ſinner can be brought unto God. This

* Luke v. 31, 32. † Matt. xi. 29. ‡ Iſ. lv. 1. ‖ Luke iv. 18.

* Rev. xxi. 6.

indeed hath ordinarily been conſidered as the firſt ſtep towards converſion. In order to treat of it in the moſt clear, and at the ſame time the moſt uſeful manner, I ſhall divide it into two branches, and firſt, conſider what is the true and genuine ſource of conviction or ſorrow for ſin; and ſecondly, to what degree it muſt be, in order to a ſaving change.

Firſt then, let us conſider what is the true and genuine ſource of conviction and ſorrow for ſin. And here we may obſerve in general, that properly ſpeaking, there can be but two ſources of ſorrow or humiliation of mind at all, viz. fear of ſuffering, and ſenſe of the evil and deſert of ſin. Both theſe are found in true penitents; and it is their union and mutual influence that diſtinguiſhes repentance unto life from every counterfeit. Many have trembled through fear of puniſhment from God, and been diſmayed at the tokens of his preſence, who, notwithſtanding, lived and died ſtrangers to true religion, or any ſaving change. We ſee that even Judas the traitor to his Lord repented, confeſſed his ſin, nay, did what he could to repair the wrong, throwing back the price of innocent blood; and yet hanged himſelf in deſpair. The ſcripture only further ſays, he went into his own place; but there have been few, if any, interpreters of ſcripture, who entertained any doubt that it was the place of torment. We every day ſee that occaſional danger, or the apprehenſion of immediate death, throws ſome into fits of terror, extorts from them confeſſions of guilt, or promiſes of amendment; and yet, in a little time they return to their former practices, and ſin with the ſame ſecurity, and perhaps with greater avidity than before.

What is the eſſential defect of ſuch ſeeming penitents? It is that they have no juſt ſenſe of the evil of ſin in itſelf; they have no inward cordial approbation of the holineſs of God's nature and law, or of the juſtice of that ſentence of condemnation which ſtands written againſt every tranſgreſſor. Here, O, Chriſtian, is the cardinal point on which true repentance turns, and the reader may plainly perceive the reaſon and neceſſity of what was formerly obſerved, that there muſt be a diſcovery of the infinite glory and

amiableneſs of the divine nature. Without this there may be a ſlaviſh terror, but no true humiliation. It is only when a ſinner ſees the unſpeakable majeſty, the tranſcendent glory, and infinite amiableneſs of the divine nature, that he is truly, effectually, and unfeignedly humbled.

Oh! that I could deliver this with proper force! that I could write and ſpeak under an experimental ſenſe of its truth! The ſinner then perceives how infinitely worthy his Maker is of the higheſt eſteem, the moſt ardent love, and the moſt unremitted obedience. He then ſees, that every intelligent creature, from the moſt ſhining ſeraph in the heavenly hoſt, to the meaneſt and moſt deſpiſed mortal worm, is under an infinite, eternal, unchangeable obligation to love God with all his heart, and ſtrength, and mind. On this account he is convinced, that alienated affection and miſplaced allegiance is infinitely ſinful. He ſees this obligation to be founded not merely nor chiefly on the greatneſs of divine power, but on the intrinſic inherent excellence of the divine nature. Therefore he is perſuaded, that there is not only danger in rebelling againſt, or diſhonoring God, but a great and manifeſt wrong and injuſtice in refuſing to honor him. This ſtrikes him with a ſenſe of his own guilt, and the guilt of all thoſe who live "without God in the world."

At once to confirm and illuſtrate this truth, I muſt make two obſervations, which will be found univerſally to hold, on the character and conduct of true penitents. 1ſt. That they obtain a new ſenſe of the excellence and obligation of the duties of divine worſhip, both public and private. Before, they were apt to conſider the duties of worſhip as little more than the means of religion; that the fear of an inviſible Judge might be a bond upon the conſcience, and keep men from fraud and diſhoneſty, or from riot and ſenſuality. They were cold and formal therefore in their own attendance, and never heard any ſpeak of joy or ſenſible communion with God in his ſanctuary, but they were ready to expreſs their deteſtation of it as hypocriſy, or their contempt of it as enthuſiaſm and folly.

But now the language of adoration is in ſome meaſure underſtood, which had been wholly inſipid and without

meaning before. They join with the pſalmiſt in ſaying, "Honor and majeſty are before him, ſtrength and beauty "are in his ſanctuary. Give unto the Lord, O ye kind-"reds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and ſtrength. "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; bring "an offering, come into his courts. O worſhip the Lord "in the beauty of holineſs; fear before him all the earth."* See alſo theſe elevated ſtrains of praiſe, which, whether they are meant as the exerciſe of the church militant on earth, or the church triumphant in heaven, are equally proper here. "And the four beaſts had each of them ſix "wings about him, and they were full of eyes within; "and they reſt not day and night, ſaying, Holy, holy, ho-"ly, Lord God almighty, which was, and is, and is to "come. And when thoſe beaſts give glory, and honor, "and thanks to him that ſat on throne, who liveth for ever "and ever; the four and twenty elders fall down before "him that ſat on the throne, and worſhip him that liveth "for ever and ever, and caſt their crowns before the throne, "ſaying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, "and honor, and power; for thou haſt created all things, "and for thy pleaſure they are, and were created."† And to the ſame purpoſe, "And I beheld, and I heard the "voice of many angels round about the throne, and the "beaſts, and the elders: and the number of them was ten "thouſand times ten thouſand, and thouſands of thou-"ſands; ſaying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb "that was ſlain, to receive power, and riches, and wiſdom, "and ſtrength, and honor, and glory, and bleſſing. And "every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, "and under the earth, and ſuch as are in the ſea, and all "that are in them, heard I, ſaying, Bleſſing, and honor, "and glory, and power be unto him that ſitteth upon the "throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."‡ Nay, a true penitent begins to ſee the beauty even of the divine ſovereignty, that all things belong to God, and therefore it is moſt fit that all things ſhould be ſubject to him, ac-

* Pſal. xcvi. 6, 7, 8, 9. † Rev. iv. 8, 9, 10, 11.

‡ Rev. v. 11, 12, 13.

cording to that ſtrong and beautiful paſſage: "And the "four and twenty elders which ſat before God on their "ſeats, fell upon their faces, and worſhipped God, ſaying, "We give thee thanks, O Lord God almighty, which art, "and waſt, and art to come, becauſe thou haſt taken to thee "thy great power, and haſt reigned."*

The other obſervation I am to make is, that a true penitent always acquires the deepeſt abhorrence of that atrocious, though prevailing ſin, of profaning the name of God in common diſcourſe. There are many perſons, not otherwiſe the moſt abandoned, who have no juſt ſenſe of the heinouſneſs of this ſin: and as it is not directly levelled againſt the temporal intereſt of our neighbors, it is far from being generally ſo ſcandalous and diſhonorable as it ought to be. Such religion or virtue as is founded on worldly principles and views, may eaſily conſiſt with its continuance; but he who is convinced of the evil of all ſin, as rebellion againſt, and diſobedience to God, will ſee the horrible guilt and impiety that attends this abominable practice. That religon which is the work of God's holy Spirit, and conſiſts in the recovery of his loſt image, will never be able to bear ſo direct a violation of his ſacred authority, ſo unprovoked an inſult upon his honor and glory.

A fear of puniſhment then we have ſeen, without a ſenſe of the evil of ſin in itſelf, is not ſufficient. Let me now add, that this diſcovery of the evil of ſin in itſelf, muſt increaſe our fear of puniſhment, by ſhewing it to be juſt. A fear of puniſhment while alone, always tempts the ſinner to ſearch about on all hands for arguments againſt that ſuffering, the juſtice of which he cannot perceive. Hence infidelity of heart and ſecret ſuggeſtions, that ſurely it cannot be that God will puniſh as he hath ſaid. Hence blaſphemous impatience. Hence riſing thoughts and rebellion againſt God, even while under his rod; ſuch as are deſcribed by the prophet Hoſea: "And they have not cried "unto me with their heart when they howled upon their "beds."† Nay, hence ſometimes the bittereſt profeſſed

* Rev. xi. 16, 17. † Hoſea vii. 14.

infidels among thoſe, who have been brought up in the knowledge of the truths of the goſpel, while they have never ſeen their beauty, or felt their power.

But ſo ſoon as there is a diſcovery of the glory of God, and the univerſal and perfect obedience due from all to him, this throws a new light on the tokens of a divine diſpleaſure againſt ſin, in the works of creation and providence. This carries home, with irreſiſtible force, all the threatenings of the wrath of God againſt ſinners in his word. Their juſtice is then deeply and inwardly felt, and the ſinner begins to wonder at the patience of a long-ſuffering God, that has not long ere now made him a monument of vengeance.

The ſame view it is that not only begins, but carries on and compleats genuine convictions of ſin, that ſilences all objections, and refutes the reaſonings of the carnal mind. Every ſincere convert will have, in a greater or leſſer degree, the evidence in himſelf, that his change is of ſovereign grace. He will probably be able to recollect in how many inſtances his mind ſet itſelf to oppoſe, and was at pains as it were to collect and muſter up every objection againſt the obligation and ſanction of the law of God. The objections are raiſed, firſt, againſt the neceſſity or benefit of obedience, and then againſt ſuffering for diſobedience, till all are borne down by the ſame almighty power which ſpake and it was done, and which can "lead captivity cap-"tive." I cannot propoſe to enumerate all the objections, or rather, all the forms, in which objections may ariſe in the ſinner's mind, when ſtruggling againſt conviction; but I ſhall mention a few of them, and ſhow what it is that muſt put them to ſilence.

1. Perhaps the ſinner will ſay, alas! why ſhould the law be ſo extremely rigorous, as to inſiſt upon abſolute and ſinleſs obedience? Hard indeed, that it will admit not of any tranſgreſſion, any omiſſion, the leaſt ſlip, or failing or frailty, but pronounceth ſo ſevere a ſentence, "Curſed is "every one that continueth not in all things which are "written in the book of the law to do them."* But conſider, I pray you, what is the law, and who is the au-

* Gal. iii. 10.

thor of the law. The ſum of all the commandments of the law is, "To love the Lord your God with all your "heart, with all your ſoul, with all your mind, and with "all your ſtrength." Is this unreaſonable? or, is it too much? Is he not infinitely amiable, and abſolutely perfect? Is he not the juſt and legitimate object of ſupreme love? Is not every defect of love to God eſſentially ſinful? and can it be otherwiſe conſidered? He is a God of truth, who will not, and who cannot lie. He muſt therefore aſſert his own majeſty and right, and ſay, as in the prophet, "Is there a God beſides me? yea, there is no God; I "know not any."* A diſcovery of the glory of God at once ſilences this objection, and ſhows that he aſks but his due; and as he is the unchangeable God, any abatement in the demands of the law not only would be unreaſonable, but is in truth impoſſible.

2. Again the ſinner will perhaps ſay, "But why ſhould "the ſentence be ſo ſevere? The law may be right in it-"ſelf, but it is hard, or even impoſſible for me. I have "no ſtrength: I cannot love the Lord with all my heart. "I am altogether inſufficient for that which is good." Oh that you would but conſider what ſort of inability you are under to keep the commandments of God! Is it natural, or is it moral? Is it really want of ability, or is it only want of will? Is it any thing more than the depravity and corruption of your hearts, which is itſelf criminal, and the ſource of all actual tranſgreſſions? Have you not natural faculties, an underſtanding, will, and affections, a wonderful frame of body, and a variety of members? What is it that hinders them all from being conſecrated to God? Are they not as proper in every reſpect for his ſervice, as for any baſer purpoſe? When you are commanded to love God with all your heart, this ſurely is not demanding more than you can pay: for if you give it not to him, you will give it to ſomething elſe, that is far from being ſo deſerving of it.

The law then is not impoſſible, in a ſtrict and proper ſenſe, even to you. Let me next aſk you, Is it unreaſon-

* Iſ. xliv. 8.

able? Does he aſk any more than all your hearts? and are they not his own? Has he not made them for himſelf? If not, let any rival riſe up and plead his title to a ſhare? Does he aſk any more than that you ſhould love him ſupremely? and is he not every way worthy of your love? If he commanded you to love what was not amiable, there would be reaſon for complaint. By tracing the matter thus to its ſource, we ſee the righteouſneſs and equity of the divine procedure, and that the law of God is eternal and immutable, as his own nature. Wherefore, "let God "be true, and every man a liar." All the attempts to impeach his conduct as ſevere, only tend to ſhow the obliquity and perverſeneſs of the depraved creature, and not to diminiſh the excellence of the all-glorious Creator.

While men continue ſlaves to ſin, it is abſurd to ſuppoſe they ſhould acquieſce in their Maker's authority: but ſo ſoon as any perſon diſcovers the infinite amiableneſs of God, and his obligation to love and ſerve him, his mouth will be immediately ſtopped, himſelf and every other ſinner brought in inexcuſeably guilty. He will ſee that there is nothing to hinder his compliance with every part of his duty, but that inward averſion to God, which is the very eſſence of ſin. It is of no conſequence what your natural powers are, whether thoſe of an angel or a man, a philoſopher or a clown, if ſoul and body, and ſuch powers as you have, are but wholly devoted to God. Do you ſay this is impoſſible? where then lies the impoſſibility of it, but in your depraved inclinations?

But we have not yet done with the objections; the moſt formidable of all is behind. Perhaps the ſinner will ſay, How unfortunate ſoever this inclination may be, I brought it into the world with me. I derived it from my parents; it is my very nature; I am not able to reſiſt it. This brings in view a ſubject far more extenſive than to admit of being fully handled here. We may alſo eaſily allow, that there is ſomething in it beyond the reach of our limited capacity: but whatever be the nature and effects, or manner of communicating original ſin; whatever be the uſe made of it, in accounting for events as a general cauſe; if any voluntary agent hath nothing to offer in oppoſition

to the ſtrongeſt obligation, but that he finds himſelf utterly unwilling to obey, it ſeems to be an excuſe of a very extraordinary kind. We are ſure that no ſuch excuſe would be accepted by an earthly law-giver; nor have we the leaſt reaſon to think, any more regard will be paid to it by him "who judgeth righteouſly."

In this, as in moſt other things, there is a wide difference between the ſentiments of a hardened and a convinced ſinner. The firſt, who hath no juſt view of the guilt of his actual tranſgreſſions, is always prone to extenuate them, by introducing original ſin as an excuſe for his conduct: but a ſinner, truly convinced of the evil of his felt and experienced enmity againſt God, makes uſe of his early and original depravity for his further humiliation. Thus the pſalmiſt David, when under the exerciſe of penitence for the complicated crimes of adultery and murder, expreſſes himſelf as follows: "Behold, I was ſhapen in iniquity, "and in ſin did my mother conceive me*." In whatever way it was firſt introduced, it is certain that all averſion and oppoſition to God muſt be evil in itſelf, and the ſource of miſery to him in whom it dwells; for all that "are afar off from him" ſhall certainly periſh; and all that continue unlike to him muſt depart from him. Without perplexing ourſelves with debates about the propriety or meaning of the imputation of Adam's firſt ſin, this we may be ſenſible of, that the guilt of all inherent corruption muſt be perſonal, becauſe it is voluntary and conſented to. Of both theſe things, a diſcovery of the glory of God will powerfully convince the ſinner. When he ſeeth the infinite beauty of holineſs, and the amiableneſs of the divine nature, he cannot forbear crying out of himſelf, "Woe is "me, for I am undone, becauſe I am a man of unclean "lips, and I dwell in the midſt of a people of unclean "lips; or mine eyes have ſeen the King, the Lord of "Hoſts†." As the impurity of his heart, ſo the irregularities of his life, will ſtare him in the face: they never appear ſo hateful, as when brought into compariſon with

* Pſ. li. 5. † Iſ. vi. 5.

the divine holineſs; and if he "eſſay to juſtify himſelf, "his own mouth will condemn him" as guilty from choice.

Once more, the ſame view will effectually confute, and ſhew the vanity of, thoſe pretenſions which are derived from our own imperfect and defective obedience. When conviction firſt lays hold of a ſinner, however vain the attempt, he has ſtill a ſtrong inclination that righteouſneſs "ſhould come by the law." This is not wonderful; for in no other way can he himſelf have any title to glory, and a thorough renunciation of all ſelf-intereſt, is too great a ſacrifice to be made at once. Hence he is ready to look with ſome meaſure of ſatisfaction on thoſe who have been greater ſinners than himſelf, and ſecretly to found his expectation of pardon for thoſe ſins he hath committed, on the ſuperior heinouſneſs of thoſe from which he hath abſtained. Hence alſo he is ready to hope he may make ſufficient atonement for his paſt ſins by future amendment; but a diſcovery of the holineſs of God, and the obligation to love him with all the heart, and ſoul, and ſtrength, and mind, ſoon deſtroys this fond imagination. It ſhews him that he can at no time do more than his duty; that he never can have any abounding or ſoliciting merit: nay, that a whole eternity, ſo to ſpeak, of perfect obedience, would do juſt nothing at all towards expiating the guilt of the leaſt ſin. But beſides all this, the ſame thing ſhews him, that his beſt duties are ſtained with ſuch ſins and imperfections, that he is ſtill but adding to the charge, inſtead of taking from the old ſcore; for "we are all as an unclean thing, and all our "righteouſneſſes are but as filthy rags; and we all do fade "as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have carried "us away*." Thus, one after another, he is ſtript of every plea, however eagerly he may cleave to them, and ſupport or bolſter up one, by the addition of another. He ſees not only his danger, but his guilt; not only the fearfulneſs of his ſtate, but the holineſs and righteouſneſs of his judge. He lies down proſtrate at the footſtool of the

* Iſaiah lxiv. 6.

Almighty, and makes unmerited mercy and ſovereign grace the only foundation of his hope.

SECT. IV.

Of the degree of ſorrow for ſin in true penitents.

HAVING thus conſidered the proper ſource of genuine conviction and ſorrow for ſin, it was propoſed next to enquire, to what degree it muſt be, in order to a ſaving change. The truth is, were not this a queſtion often propoſed, and the reſolution of it deſired by ſerious perſons, the weakeſt of whom deſerve all attention and regard from every miniſter of Chriſt, I ſhould have left it altogether untouched. The reaſon of this obſervation is, that I am perſuaded, and take the preſent opportunity of affirming it, that the chief diſtinction between convictions genuine or ſalutary, and ſuch as are only tranſitory and fruitleſs, does not lie in their ſtrength and violence, ſo much as their principle and ſource, which has been formerly explained.

There is often as great, or, perhaps, it may be ſafely ſaid there is often a greater degree of terror in perſons brought under occaſional convictions, which are afterwards fruitleſs, than in others in whom they are the introduction to a ſaving change. It is probable that the horror of mind which poſſeſſed Cain after his brother's murder, was of the moſt terrible kind. It is probable that the humiliation of Ahab, after he had cauſed Naboth to be deſtroyed by falſe evidence, and was threatened with a dreadful viſitation, was exceeding great. It is probable that the mere paſſion of fear in either of theſe criminals was equal, if not ſuperior, to the fear of any true penitent recorded in ſcripture. It is the principle that diſtinguiſhes their nature. It is the differing principle that produces oppoſite effects. The one is alarmed and trembles through fear of wrath from an irreſiſtible and incenſed God; the other is truly ſenſible of ſin in all its malignity, and fears the ſanction of a righteous, but violated law. The one feels himſelf a miſerable creature; the other

confeſſes himſelf a guilty ſinner. The one is terrified, and the other is humbled.

It is ſome doubt with me, whether in fruitleſs convictions there is any ſenſe at all of ſin, as ſuch; I mean, as truly meriting puniſhment from a juſt and holy God. Such perſons ordinarily are diſpleaſed at the holineſs of God's nature, aad murmer at the ſtrictneſs of his law; and therefore, however much they may dread ſuffering here or hereafter, they cannot be ſaid to be convinced of ſin. We have ſeen ſome who, when afflictions brought their ſins to remembrance, were but driven on, by deſpair, to higher degrees of guilt, and, the more they ſeem to fear the approaching judgment of God, only increaſed in the impatience of blaſpheming rage.

However, as there is a great meaſure of deceit in the human heart, ſome may be ready to flatter themſelves, on the one hand, that they have ſeen the evil of ſin in itſelf; and ſome, on the other, to fear that they have not ſeen it as they ought, becauſe their ſorrow has not riſen to the requiſite degree. Many have expreſſed uneaſineſs that they never mourned for ſin in a manner correſponding to the ſtrong ſcripture declarations of its odious and hateful nature, or to the following deſcription of goſpel penitents: "And I will pour upon the houſe of David, "and upon the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, the ſpirit of grace "and ſupplication, and they ſhall look upon me whom "they have pierced, and they ſhall mourn for him as one "mourneth for his only ſon, and ſhall be in bitterneſs "for him, as one that is in bitterneſs for his firſt-born*." For this reaſon I ſhall make an obſervation or two on the degree of ſorrow for ſin in true penitents, which may enable us to judge in every queſtion of the ſame nature.

1. One thing, in general, muſt be carefully remembered, that we ought not to lay down one rule for all perſons. We are not to meaſure the ſorrow of any true penitent, and make a ſtandard from it for the effects or expreſſions of ſorrow in any other. The ſtrength of all the paſſions, and their readineſs to expreſs themſelves, is greater naturally in ſome than in others. There is nothing of which

* Zech. xii. 10.

men may be more ſenſible from daily experience. Love and hatred, joy and grief, deſire and averſion, ſhew themſelves by much more violent emotions in ſome than in others. It would be wrong, therefore, to reduce all to one rule, and none ought to look upon it as a juſt cauſe of diſquiet, that they have not had the ſame degree or depth of diſtreſs and anguiſh which others have had, of whom they have read or heard. Another circumſtance may alſo be the occaſion of diverſity. In ſome, convictions may have been more early and gradual, and, therefore, leſs violent and ſenſible. It is not to be ſuppoſed that Samuel, whoſe very conception was the anſwer of prayer, who was called from his mother's womb, and ſerved in the temple from his being a child, ſhould have experienced the ſame depth of humiliation with ſuch as Manaſſeh, for example, who had been guilty of many atrocious crimes, and continued long in a hardened and inſenſible ſtate. Therefore,

2. Suffer me to obſerve, that the great and principal evidence of a proper degree of conviction and ſorrow for ſin, is its permanency and practical influence. Genuine conviction is not a flaſh of fervor, however ſtrong, but a deep, abiding, and governing principle, which will ſhew its ſtrength, by its habitual power over its oppoſite. Every true penitent will join in theſe words of Elihu: "Surely it is meet to be ſaid unto God, I have borne chaſtiſement, I will not offend any more; that which I ſee not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more*." Nothing elſe will be a ſufficient evidence of penitence, where this is wanting; and where this is the caſe, nothing can be wanting that is really neceſſary. This may, perhaps, as I obſerved on another part of this diſcourſe, be thought too general, but I am perſuaded it is the only ſafe ground to build upon, according to the ſcriptures. Every other claim of relation will be rejected at laſt by our Saviour and Judge, as he hath plainly told us: "Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will

* Job xxxiv. 31, 32.

" of my father which is in heaven. Many will ſay to me " in that day, Lord, lord, have we not propheſied in thy " name? and in thy name caſt out devils? and in thy " name done many wonderful works? And then will I " profeſs unto them, I never knew you, depart from me, " ye that work iniquity*."

Would any know, therefore, whether their ſorrow for ſin hath been to the requiſite degree, let me intreat them to ſuffer conſcience to anſwer honeſtly to the following interrogatories. Has your conviction of ſin been ſuch as to make you abhor and hate it in every form? Hath it been ſuch as to make you reſolve upon a thorough and perpetual ſeparation from your once beloved pleaſures? Does it make you ready to examine the lawfulneſs of every purſuit, and to abſtain even from every doubtful or ſuſpected practice? Is there no known ſin that you are deſirous to excuſe or palliate, ſtudious to conceal, or willing to ſpare? Remember this neceſſary caution of our Saviour: " And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and " caſt it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of " thy members ſhould periſh, and not that thy whole " body ſhould be caſt into hell. And if thy right hand " offend thee, cut it off, and caſt it from thee; for it is pro- " fitable for thee that one of thy members ſhould periſh, " and not that thy whole body ſhould be caſt into hell†." Is there no ſin, however long practiſed, or however greatly delighted in; is there no ſin, however gainful or honorable, but you deſire liberty from its enſlaving power, as well as deliverance from its condemning guilt? Is there no part of the law of God, of the duty and character of a Chriſtian, however ungrateful to a covetous heart, however deſpiſed by a ſcorning world, but you acknowledge its obligation? Would you, indeed, rather be holy than great? Do you rather chooſe perſecution with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon? See what terms Chriſt makes with his diſciples: " If any " man will come after me, let him deny himſelf, and take " up his croſs, and follow me: for whoſoever will ſave his

* Matt. vii. 21, 22, 23. † Matt. v. 29, 30.

" life ſhall loſe it, and whoſoever will loſe his life, for my " ſake, ſhall find it*." Upon the whole, inſtead of finding fault with the duty or lot of God's children, can you truly ſay, " O that there were ſuch an heart in me that I " could keep his ſtatutes! The law of the Lord is perfect- " ly holy. The paths of the Lord toward me have been " infinitely gracious. My heart only is exceeding ſinful. " O Lord, write thy law in my heart, and put it in my " inward parts: give me a new heart and a new ſpirit, and " cauſe me to walk in thy ſtatutes, and keep thy judg- " ments, and do them."

3. It is an excellent evidence of conviction's being right both in principle and in degree, when the penitent hath a greater fear of ſin than of ſuffering. As the great ſource of genuine conviction of ſin is a ſenſe of its evil in itſelf, rather than an apprehenſion of its conſequences even in the life to come, there is no way in which this will diſcover itſelf more diſtinctly, than in the views we have of ſin, and ſuffering in the preſent ſtate. Whether do you grieve moſt heartily for ſin, or for worldly loſſes? Which of them do you avoid with the greateſt ſolicitude and care? Will not this ſhow what it is that lies neareſt your hearts, and hath the dominion there? Will not this ſhow it in a manner that muſt be convincing even to yourſelves, and leave no room to reply? Alas! how heavy a ſentence does this carry againſt many profeſſing Chriſtians? How great their anxiety about the things of time, how little about the concerns of eternity? How carefully will they obſerve the increaſe or decreaſe of their trade and opulence? But how little attention will they pay to the growth or decay of religion in their hearts? They will dread the arts, and fly from the ſociety of a fraudulent dealer, but will ſuſpect no danger while their ears are drinking in the poiſon of licentious or impure converſation. The loſs of a child, or the loſs of their ſubſtance, oppreſſes them with ſorrow, while even the commiſſion of groſs ſin, if concealed from the world, produces a reflection ſcarcely felt, and ſpeedily forgotten.

* Matt. xvi. 24.

I have ſaid, indeed, above, that all perſons are not equally ſuſceptible of violent emotions of any kind. But what ſhall be ſaid of the ſame perſons, who have the ſtrongeſt paſſions on every other ſubject, and nothing but coldneſs and indifference in matters of religion? What ſhall be ſaid of the ſame perſons, who are eaſily and deeply affected with all temporal ſufferings, and yet are but very ſlightly affected with a ſenſe of the evil of ſin? Whoſe tears flow readily and copiouſly over a dying friend, but have no tears at all to ſhed over a dying Saviour? Does this at all correſpond with the deſcription given by the prophet, "of mourning as for an only ſon?" in which penitential ſorrow is compared to the moſt ſevere and exquiſite of all human calamities. I muſt, however, obſerve, that temporal ſufferings are ordinarily attended and aggravated by ſenſible images, and are alſo ſometimes ſudden and unexpected, on both which accounts they may more powerfully call forth the expreſſions of ſorrow and ſympathy. But it is not difficult to judge which of them dwells moſt heavily upon the mind, which of them would be firſt avoided by the deliberate choice of the heart. Every true penitent does certainly ſee ſin to be the greateſt of all evils, and will diſcover this by compariſon with all the other evils of which he hath at preſent any knowledge or experience.

4. I ſhall only mention one other evidence of conviction's being to a proper degree, which is when a ſenſe of the evil of ſin is ſtill growing, inſtead of diminiſhing. This will be found eſſentially to diſtinguiſh a ſenſe of the evil of ſin in itſelf, from a mere terror of God's power in taking vengeance on the ſinner. Time gradually weakens the one, but knowledge, and even the mercy of God, continues to increaſe the other. When a ſinner is brought under great convictions, it is a ſtate ſo painful and diſtreſſing, that it cannot continue long. Some kind of peace muſt of neceſſity ſucceed. Either he ſtifles his convictions, hides the danger by ſhutting his own eyes, and returns to his former ſecurity and licentiouſneſs of practice; or he does ſome things for a time, to quiet the cries of conſcience, and lay a foundation for future peace; or, laſtly, he

returns to God through Chriſt, by true repentance, and continues to ſerve him in newneſs of life.

The firſt of theſe caſes needs no illuſtration; the ſenſe of ſin in all ſuch perſons being not ſo properly weakened as deſtroyed. In the ſecond, the ſinner is under great reſtraints for a ſeaſon, but, when the terror is over, his obedience and diligence is immediately relaxed. This ſhows plainly, that he had no ſincere or cordial affection to the law of God, but was afraid of his power. It ſhews that his convictions never were of a right kind, and, therefore, it is no wonder their ſtrength ſhould decay. But, in every true penitent, a ſenſe of ſin not only continues, but daily increaſes. His growing diſcovery of the glory of God, points out more clearly to him his own corruption and depravity, both in its quantity and its malignity, ſo to ſpeak. The very mercies of God, whatever delight or ſweetneſs they afford, take nothing away from his ſenſe of the evil of his doings, but rather melt him down in penitential ſorrow. They ſerve to cover him with confuſion at his own unworthineſs, and to fill him with wonder at the divine patience and condeſcenſion.

The firſt work of a convinced ſinner is, to mourn over the groſs enormities of a profligate life, or a life devoted to worldly purſuits. And his continued employment after converſion is, to reſiſt and wreſtle with that inherent corruption which was hidden from his view before, but becomes daily more and more ſenſible. So true is this, that I have known many inſtances in which the moſt genuine expreſſions of ſelf-abaſement happening to fall from aged experienced Chriſtians, have appeared to others as little better than affectation. They were not able to conceive the propriety of theſe ſentiments, which long acquaintance with God and with ourſelves doth naturally and infallibly inſpire.

From theſe remarks, let me beg the reader to judge of the reality and progreſs of the ſpiritual life. Does your ſenſe of the evil of ſin not only continue, but grow? Do you now ſee ſin in many things which you never ſuſpected before? Do you ſee more of the boldneſs, ingratitude,

and ſottiſh folly of ſinners and deſpiſers of God? Are you daily making new diſcoveries of the vanity, ſenſuality, and treachery of your own hearts? Be not diſcouraged at it, but humbled by it. Let it empty you of all ſelf-eſteem and ſelf-dependence, and give you a higher reliſh of the goſpel of peace. The ſubſtance of the goſpel is "ſalvation to the "chief of ſinners, by the riches of divine grace, and the "ſanctification of your polluted natures by the power of "the Holy Ghoſt."

As I would willingly give as much information and inſtruction as poſſible, I ſhall, before quitting this part of the ſubject, ſpeak a few words of a pretty extraordinary opinion to be found in ſome of the practical writers of the laſt age. It is, that genuine conviction, and the ſoul's ſubjection to God, ought to be carried ſo far in every true penitent, as to make him willing, ſatisfied, and, ſome ſay, even "pleaſed," that God ſhould glorify his juſtice in his everlaſting perdition. This is ſo repugnant to nature, and to that very ſolicitude about our eternal happineſs, by which the conſcience is firſt laid hold of, that it appears to be utterly impoſſible. There have been many to whom this requiſition has given inexpreſſible concern, has been a daily ſnare to their conſcience, and an obſtruction to their peace. There is ſuch an inſeparable connection between our duty and happineſs, that the queſtion ſhould never have been moved; but, for the ſatisfaction of thoſe who may have met, or may ſtill meet with it in authors, otherwiſe deſervedly eſteemed, I ſhall make ſome remarks, which I hope will either explain it in a ſound ſenſe, or ſhew it to be at bottom falſe.

Men do often differ more in words than in ſubſtance. Perhaps what theſe authors chiefly mean, is no more than what has been explained above at conſiderable length. viz. That the ſinner finds himſelf without excuſe, his "mouth "is ſtopped," he ſeeth the holineſs of the law, he confeſſeth the juſtice of the ſentence, he quits every claim but mercy. Thus he may be ſaid to abſolve or juſtify God, though he ſhould leave him to periſh for ever. So far, I apprehend, it is undeniably juſt; otherwiſe, the very foundation of the goſpel is overthrown, and ſalvation is no

" of grace," but " of debt." If we impartially examine the word mercy, and the many ſtrong declarations in ſcripture of our obligations to God for the gift of eternal life, we ſhall find that they cannot, conſiſtently, imply leſs, than that the ſinner " deſerved," and was liable, to " eternal death."

But to carry the thing farther, and to ſay that the penitent muſt be pleaſed and ſatisfied with damnation itſelf, as he is pleaſed with ſuffering in another view, as it is his heavenly Father's ſanctified rod, appears to me to be at once unnatural, unreaſonable, unlawful, and impoſſible. It is plainly contrary to that deſire of our own happineſs which is ſo deeply implanted in our natures, and which ſeems to be inſeparable from a rational creature. No ſuch thing is, either directly or conſequentially, aſſerted in the holy ſcriptures, which ſo often urge us to a due care of our own beſt intereſts. " Wherefore, ſays the prophet, do you " ſpend your money for that which is not bread, and " your labor for that which ſatisfieth not? Hearken " diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, " and let your ſoul delight itſelf in fatneſs. Incline your " ear, and come unto me, hear, and your ſouls ſhall live, " and I will make an everlaſting covenant with you, even " the ſure mercies of David."* Further, the propoſition ſeems to me neceſſarily to imply an impoſſibility in itſelf. For what is damnation? It is to be for ever ſeparated from, and deprived of, the fruition of God. Is this then, a dutiful object either of deſire or acquieſcence? It is to hate God and blaſpheme his name, as well as to be baniſhed from his preſence. Can this be tolerable to any true penitent? or is it reconcileable to, or conſiſtent with, ſubjection to his righteous will? Can any creature be ſuppoſed to pleaſe God, by giving up all hope of his favor? Or is it leſs abſurd than " diſobeying" him from a ſenſe of " duty," and " hating" him from a principle of " love?"

We muſt, therefore, carefully ſeparate the acknowledgment of divine juſtice, and moſt unconditional ſubjection to the divine ſovereignty, from an abſolute deſpair, or giving up all hope in the divine mercy. We have a very

* Iſa. lv. 2, 3.

beautiful ſcripture inſtance of humble, yet perſiſting importunity, in the woman of Canaan, who met with many repulſes, confeſſed the juſtice of every thing that made againſt her, and yet continued to urge her plea. Neither is there any difference between the way in which ſhe ſupplicated of the Saviour a cure for her diſtreſſed daughter, and the way in which an awakened ſinner will implore from the ſame Saviour more neceſſary relief to an afflicted conſcience. "And behold a woman of Canaan came out "of the ſame coaſts, and cried unto him, ſaying, Have "mercy on me, O Lord, thou ſon of David, my daughter "is grievouſly vexed with a devil. But he anſwered her "not a word. And his diſciples came and beſought him, "ſaying, Send her away, for ſhe crieth after us. But he "anſwered and ſaid, I am not ſent but unto the loſt ſheep "of the houſe of Iſrael. Then came ſhe and worſhipped "him, ſaying, Lord help me. But he anſwered and ſaid, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and caſt it to "dogs. And ſhe ſaid, Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of "the crumbs which fall from their maſter's table. Then "Jeſus anſwered and ſaid unto her, O woman, great is "thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."* I ſhall conclude with mentioning an inſtance of a ſimilar character in a foreigner of eminent ſtation, who had been a great profligate, and afterwards became a great penitent.† He compoſed a little piece of poetry after his converſion, the leading ſentiment of which was what I have recommended above, and in his own language was to the following purpoſe: "Great God, thy judgments are full of "righteouſneſs, thou takeſt pleaſure in the exerciſe of "mercy; but I have ſinned to ſuch a height, that juſtice "demands my deſtruction, and mercy itſelf ſeems to ſo"licit my perdition. Diſdain my tears, ſtrike the blow, "and execute thy judgment. I am willing to ſubmit, and "adore, even in periſhing, the equity of thy proceedure. "But on what place will the ſtroke fall, that is not cover"ed with the blood of Chriſt?"

* Matt. xv. 22—28. † Des Barreaux.

SECT. V.

Acceptance of salvation through the cross of Christ.

THE next great ſtep in a ſinner's change is a diſcovery and acceptance of ſalvation from ſin and miſery through Jeſus Chriſt. This is the laſt and finiſhing ſtep of the glorious work. When this is attained, the change is compleated, the new nature is fully formed in all its parts. The ſpiritual ſeed is implanted, and hath taken root; and it will arrive by degrees, in every veſſel of mercy, to that meaſure of maturity and ſtrength, that it pleaſeth God each ſhall poſſeſs before he be carried hence.

It is eaſy to ſee, that conviction of ſin which hath been before illuſtrated, prepares and paves the way for a diſcovery and acceptance of ſalvation by Chriſt. Before conviction of ſin, or when conviction is but imperfect, the goſpel of Chriſt, and particularly the doctrine of the croſs, almoſt conſtantly appears to be fooliſhneſs. Or if, as ſometimes happens, education and example prompts the ſinner to ſpeak with ſome degree of reverence of the name, character, and undertaking of a Saviour, there is no diſtinct perception of the meaning, nor any inward reliſh of the ſweetneſs of the ſalutary truths. But thoſe who have been "wounded in their ſpirits, and grieved in their "minds," begin to perceive their unſpeakable importance and value. That myſtery which was hid from ages and generations, begins to open upon the ſoul in its luſtre and glory. The helpleſs and hopeleſs ſtate of the ſinner makes him earneſtly and anxiouſly enquire, whether there is any way to eſcape, whether there is any door of mercy or of hope. He ſays, with the awakened and trembling jailor, "What "muſt I do to be ſaved? Innumerable evils have com- "paſſed me about, mine iniquities have taken hold upon "me, ſo that I am not able to look up; they are more "than the hairs of mine head, therefore my heart faileth "me.* I have no excuſe to offer, nor any ſhelter to fly "to: the works, the word, and the providence of God,

* Pſal. xl. 12.

" ſeem all to be up in arms againſt me, and have incloſed " me as an enemy to him. O how fearful a thing is it to " fall into the hands of the living God! Who ſhall dwell " with devouring fire? Who ſhall dwell with everlaſting " burnings? Is there no proſpect of relief? Is there no " balm in Gilead? Is there no phyſician there? Wonder- " ful has been my paſt blindneſs! I have awakened as out " of a dream, and find myſelf haſtening faſt to the pit of " deſtruction. What would I not do, what would I not " give for good ground to believe that my guilt were taken " away, and my peace made with God?"

With what eagerneſs and earneſtneſs, hitherto unknown, does the ſinner now enquire after the way to life? With what ſolicitude does he " go forth by the footſteps of the " flock, and feed beſide the ſhepherds tents." The ſab- baths, and ordinances, and word of God, are now quite different things from what they were before. No more waſte of that ſacred time in buſineſs or in play. No more ſerenity of heart, becauſe he had been regularly and con- ſtantly at church, but an aſtoniſhing view of the ſins of his holy things; careleſs, formal, heartleſs worſhip. He cries out with the Pſalmiſt, " Lord, if thou ſhouldſt mark " iniquity, who ſhall ſtand." No more indifferent, ſloth- ful, diſdainful hearing the word. No more critical hear- ing the word, that he may commend the ability, or deride the weakneſs of the preacher. With what concern does he hang upon the ſacred meſſage, to ſee if there be any thing upon which he can lay hold? He then hears that " God is " in Chriſt, reconciling the world to himſelf." The very news of ſalvation, the bare mention of pardon, is now a joyful ſound. It rouſes his attention, it awakens his cu- rioſity, and he ſets himſelf to weigh and ponder the im- portant intimation. He hears that " God ſo loved the " world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoe- " ver believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have ever- " laſting life. For God ſent not his Son into the world " to condemn the world, but that the world through him " might be ſaved.* Is there then," ſays he, " hope of

* John iii. 16, 17.

" mercy with God, whom I have ſo long forgotten, and ſo
" greatly offended? hath he indeed loved a guilty world?
" hath he loved them in ſo amazing a manner, as to ſend
" his only begotten Son to ſave them from deſtruction?
" How great is the giver, how wonderful the gift, and
" how undeſerving the objects of his love?"

Here perhaps a difficulty may occur. " It may be ſo," ſays the ſoul; " but are all the children of Adam the ob-
" jects of divine love? Shall every ſinner be partaker of
" divine mercy? Surely not. How then are they diſtin-
" guiſhed? Perhaps he intends only to ſave a few of the
" leaſt unworthy, and to glorify his juſtice and ſeverity
" in the condemnation of the moſt eminently guilty.
" What then have I reaſon to expect? None, none, none
" of any rank ſo criminal as I. I have ſinned early, and
" I have ſinned long. I have ſinned againſt the cleareſt
" light and knowledge. I have ſinned againſt innumera-
" ble mercies. I have ſinned againſt the threatenings of
" God's word, the rebukes of his providence, the checks
" of my own conſcience, and the unwearied pains and di-
" ligence of miniſters and parents. I have burſt every
" bond, and torn in pieces every reſtraining tie." How many gracious promiſes preſent themſelves immediately to extinguiſh this fear? " Come now, and let us reaſon to-
" gether, ſaith the Lord; though your ſins be as ſcarlet,
" they ſhall be as white as ſnow; though they be red like
" crimſon, they ſhall be as wool; if ye be willing and
" obedient, ye ſhall eat the good of the land.*—
" Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wiſe caſt out.†
" Wherefore alſo he is able to ſave them to the uttermoſt
" that come unto God by him.‡ And the Spirit and the
" bride ſay come; and let him that heareth ſay come;
" and let him that is athirſt come; and whoſoever will, let
" him take the water of life freely."‖ To theſe promiſes may be added many ſcripture examples of firſt-rate ſinners, ſaved by the power of God, that none may deſpair. An idolatrous Manaſſeh, an unrighteous and oppreſſive publican Zaccheus, an unclean Mary Magdalene, and

* If. i. 18, 19. † John vi. 37. ‡ Heb. vii. 25. ‖ Rev. xxii. 17.

a perſecuting Paul. Then is the ſoul brought to acknowledge and adore the matchleſs love of God; to repeat and adopt the words of the apoſtle Paul; "This is a faithful "ſaying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Chriſt Jeſus "came into the world to ſave ſinners, of whom I am "chief."

The ſinner, in ſuch a ſituation, is wholly employed in alternately viewing his own deplorable character and ſtate on the one hand, and the ſufficiency and efficacy of the remedy on the other. As theſe take their turns in his mind, his hope riſes or falls. Perhaps when he again reflects on the infinite number and heinous nature of his offences; when he conſiders the holineſs and purity of God's nature and law, he is ready to bring all into queſtion, and to ſay, "How can theſe things be? Is it poſſible that all this guilt "can be paſſed by, is it poſſibly that it can be forgiven "and forgotten by a holy God? Is he not of purer eyes "than to behold iniquity? Is it not ſaid, that evil cannot "dwell with him? That ſinners ſhall not ſtand in his pre-"ſence? How then can I preſume to approach him? I, "who have been ſo daring and obſtinate a rebel? What "reception can I expect to meet with but, Bind him "hand and foot, and take him away, and caſt him into "utter darkneſs; there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of "teeth."*

To remove this diſtruſt, and aſſure his heart before God, he is informed of the foundation of his hope, that ſalvation comes by a Mediator. He undertook our cauſe, he purchaſed redemption by his precious blood. Hear him ſaying in the councils of the Moſt high, "Sacrifice "and offering thou didſt not deſire; mine ears haſt thou "opened. Burnt-offering and ſin-offering haſt thou not "required. Then ſaid I, Lo, I come, in the volume of "the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O "my God; yea, thy law is within my heart."† Hear alſo in what manner he executed this gracious purpoſe. "He was wounded for our tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed "for our iniquities; the chaſtiſement of our peace was

* Matt. xxii. 13. † Pſ. xl. 6, 7, 8.

" upon him, and with his ſtripes we are healed. All we " like ſheep have gone aſtray, we have turned every one " to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the ini- " quity of us all*." Let us alſo ſee how this matter is re- preſented in the new teſtament. " Whom God hath ſet " forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to " declare his righteouſneſs for the remiſſion of ſins that are " paſt, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I ſay, " at this time his righteouſneſs: that he might be juſt, " and the juſtifier of him that believeth in Jeſus†. For " he hath made him to be ſin for us, who knew no ſin, " that we might be made the righteouſneſs of God in " him‡."

It is through this man, and through his blood, that " re- " pentance and remiſſion of ſins is preached to all na- " tions." Is not this a ſufficient and ſtable ground of hope? In the ſubſtitution of our ſurety, we ſee a way opened for the reception and reſtoration of ſinners, in a perfect conſiſtency with all the divine perfections. The ſpotleſs purity and holineſs, the ſtrict and impartial juſtice of God, ſeem to raiſe an inſuperable obſtacle to our ad- miſſion into his favor; but in the ſufferings and atone- ment of our Redeemer, we ſee how he may teſtify his ab- horrence of ſin, and puniſh it, and at the ſame time ſhew mercy to the ſinner. There is a perfect harmony of all the divine attributes in this deſign, and particularly a joint illuſtration of mercy and juſtice. This is the goſpel of Chriſt, the bleſſed and reviving meſſage brought into the world by the prince of peace. This is " the record " which God hath given of his Son."

How welcome, how reviving this, to the diſcouraged convinced ſinner? His very concern and fear when pro- ceeding upon proper grounds, ariſes from a view of the infinite evil of ſin, ſo provoking to a holy God. But in this plan laid by divine wiſdom, he ſees the guilt of ſin ſufficiently expiated by a ſacrifice of infinite value. " For " we are not redeemed with corruptible things, ſuch as

* Iſ. liii. 5, 6. † Rom. iii. 25, 26. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 21.

" ſilver and gold—but with the precious blood of Chriſt, " as of a Lamb without blemiſh and without ſpot*."

He compares and contraſts, if I may ſo ſpeak, the greatneſs of his guilt with the price of his pardon. Then appears, with new and uncommon force, the greatneſs of this myſtery of godlineſs, GOD manifeſted in the fleſh. A victim no leſs conſiderable than the eternal and " only-" begotten" Son of God, " the brightneſs of his Father's " glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon." What is it that cannot be purchaſed by this marvellous exchange? The believer ſees with adoring wonder, the juſtice of God more awfully ſevere, in awaking his ſword againſt the man who was " his fellow," than if the whole race of offending men had been irrecoverably loſt. At the ſame time he ſees the unſpeakable dignity and majeſty of God, in his infinite and truly royal mercy, great in itſelf, and greater ſtill in the way in which it is diſpenſed. " Here-" in is love indeed, not that we loved God, but that he " loved us, and ſent his ſon to be the propitiation for our " ſins†."

I cannot help here obſerving, that this ſalvation is ſo amazing, ſo wonderful in its nature, and ſo far removed from any thing we know among men, that we are in danger of being put to a ſtand, and can ſcarcely conceive it poſſible. But on the other hand, when we conſider that it carrieth not upon it any of the marks of human wiſdom, we are naturally led to ſay, " Salvation belongeth " unto God.—His ways are not as our ways, nor his " thoughts as our thoughts." Therefore when conviction of ſin makes us feel the neceſſity, and diſcovers the glory of our Saviour's atonement; we may both reſt aſſured of its truth, and triumph in its power. We may ſay with the apoſtle Paul, " Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge " of God's elect? It is God that juſtifieth: who is he that " condemneth? It is Chriſt that died, yea rather that is " riſen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who " alſo maketh interceſſion for us‡."

* 1 Pet. i. 18. † 1 John iv. 10. ‡ Rom. viii. 33, 34.

But, "Pauſe a little, my ſoul," ſaith the convinced ſinner, "what tidings are here? What ſaith the ſcripture, "Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? "Unanſwerable indeed! Happy, happy, thrice happy "they, who are the objects of God's everlaſting, diſtin- "guiſhing and electing love. But how can I be ſure that "this includes, or rather does not include me? Can I "ever hope to read my name written in the Lamb's "book of life?" No. But when you confeſs you cannot read any thing there in your favor, who hath authorized you to ſuppoſe any thing there to your prejudice? Secret things belong only to God. We are not permitted to ſearch, and we are not able to comprehend or explain the infinite depth of the divine councils. But do not things that are revealed belong to us? And how ſhall we preſume to ſet at variance the ſecret and revealed will of God? Is not the commiſſion ſufficiently extenſive? "And "he ſaid unto them, go ye into all the world, and preach "the goſpel to every creature; he that believeth and is "baptized, ſhall be ſaved; and he that believeth not, "ſhall be damned*." Is not the call unlimited and univerſal? "Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are "heavy laden, and I will give you reſt†." "And Jeſus "ſaid unto them, I am the bread of life; he that com- "eth to me ſhall never hunger, and he that believeth on "me ſhall never thirſt‡." "And in the laſt day, that "great day of the feaſt, Jeſus ſtood and cried, ſaying, If "any man thirſt, let him come unto me and drink||."

Can you then entertain any doubt of the call reaching to you, or queſtion your title to reſt upon this rock of ages? Behold, we preach unto you Chriſt crucified, a deſpiſed Saviour, indeed, "to the Jews a ſtumbling-block, "and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs;" but the "power of God, "and the wiſdom of God for ſalvation to every one that "believeth." There is no guilt ſo deep, but this precious blood will waſh it out. No gift ſo great, but infinite merit is ſufficient to procure it. No nature ſo polluted, but in-

* Mark. xvi. 15, 16. † Matt. xi. 28. ‡ John. vi. 35.
|| John. vii. 37.

finite power is ſufficient to renew it. Shall we then any more withhold our approbation, or refuſe our conſent? Shall not every ſinner, burdened with a ſenſe of guilt or danger, intimate his compliance and urge his claim, and ſay, "Thanks, thanks be to God for his unſpeakable gift. "—It is ſalvation by the death of Chriſt, and therefore "becoming a holy and a jealous God, with whom evil "cannot dwell. It is the ſame unchangeable God, who "enacted the holy law, and who publiſhes this glorious "goſpel.—It is ſalvation by grace, otherwiſe no child of "Adam could have had any claim; and it is meet that "the lofty looks of man ſhould be humbled, and the Lord "alone exalted in that day.—It is ſalvation to the chief "of ſinners: I am the man. I hear my character clear-"ly deſcribed in the word of God. I can read my name "in the general and gracious invitation. I will accept of "the offer, I will receive and embrace this bleſſed Saviour "as my Lord and my God, as my life and my all."

Once more, perhaps the believer is ſtill ſtaggered, and his faith begins to fail. Aſtoniſhed at the greatneſs of the mercy, "he believeth not for joy, and wondereth." He is ready to ſay, "Might I but hold faſt this beginning of "my confidence, I would not envy the greateſt monarch "on earth his throne, his purple, or his ſceptre, but would "ſing the new ſong put into my mouth, Unto him that "loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood, "and hath made us kings and prieſts to God and his Fa-"ther, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. "But alas! are not all the promiſes of ſalvation only in "favor of them that believe? Here then the concluſion "may fail. I am ſenſible of a lamentable weakneſs and "backwardneſs of mind; and whilſt I think I have no "doubt of any of the truths of God, I greatly diſtruſt the "reality of my own conſent and compliance with his "will." Do you then really give credit to all the truths of God reſpecting your own loſt condition, and the only way of deliverance from it? May the Lord himſelf increaſe your faith; for if it be ſo indeed, you are happy and ſafe. Theſe truths, theſe alone, are the ſure foundation of hope. I am afraid we have all too ſtrong a ten-

dency to look for ſome encouraging qualification in ourſelves, on which we might more ſecurely reſt. What is faith? Is it any more than receiving the record which God hath given of his ſon, believing the teſtimony of the Amen, the true and faithful witneſs? Is not your peace and reconcilation with God, and the ſanctification of your natures, expreſsly provided for in the all-ſufficiency of Chriſt, and to him you are aſſured that you muſt be indebted for both? What ſtandeth in the way of your comfort then, but either that you do not give credit to the promiſe he hath made, or that you are not willing that he ſhould do it for you? and this I acknowledge is both unbelief and impenitence.

Complain therefore no more, that you are afraid of yourſelves, whilſt yet you pretend to have the higheſt eſteem of the bleſſings of redemption; on the contrary, ſay unto God, in a thankful frame of ſpirit, "Glory to God in "the higheſt, on earth peace, and good-will towards men. "I praiſe thee for this meſſage of peace. I think I ſee, in "ſome meaſure, its neceſſity, truth and beauty. I ſee it, "I truſt to ſuch a degree, that it is the ſole foundation of "my hope. I renounce every other claim; nay, I abhor "the thoughts of any other claim: Yea, doubtleſs, and I "count all things but loſs, for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord, for whom I have ſuffered the loſs of all things, and do count them but dung "that I may win Chriſt, and be found in him, not having "mine own righteouſneſs, which is of the law, but that "which is through the faith of Chriſt, the righteouſneſs "which is of God by faith*. It grieves me that there is "ſuch a backwardneſs in me to give glory to thy name, "and to be indebted to the riches of thy grace. Subdue "my obſtinacy, and rule by thine own power. Lord, I "believe, help thou mine unbelief."

* Phil. iii. 8.

SECT. VI.

How the believer recovers peace of conscience.

WE have now seen in what way the believer is reconciled to God, and delivered from condemnation. It will not be improper however also to consider how he recovers peace of conscience, and how his heart and life are governed in his after walk. This will serve more fully to illustrate the influence and operation of the truths of the gospel. There is even a necessity for doing so on two different accounts: 1. That, as has been shewn above at considerable length, every true penitent is deeply and inwardly sensible of the evil of sin in itself. He is not merely afraid of wrath, but sees the impurity and pollution of his own heart. Supposing therefore, will the intelligent reader say, this great distinction thoroughly established, his relief is but half accomplished. There may be no more condemnation for him in the law of God, for the breach of which satisfaction has been made and accepted; but he is only so much the more liable to the condemnation of his own conscience. He must still suffer the reproaches and challenges of his own mind, which make so great a part of the misery of a guilty state.

This receives additional strength, from a second consideration, that as he is justified by faith, he hath peace only through the blood of Christ. This is not from himself, and may be thought to leave him, so to speak, in point of state and character, in point of pollution and defilement, just as before; nay, the extraordinary, unsolicited, undeserved grace of God, may be thought to increase his self-condemnation, and set the malignity of his rebellion in the strongest light. And indeed so far this is true, that the free grace of God was intended, and does serve to produce a growing humiliation of mind and self-abasement, as well as an admiration of the love of God in Christ Jesus. As the tenderness of a parent is an image which God hath very frequently made use of, to shadow forth his own infinite compassion, I will borrow from it an illustration of the two remarks just now made. Suppose any child has of-

fended a parent by a groſs inſtance of undutiful behavior, for which he hath been ſeverely reproved, and for ſome time kept at a diſtance: if the parent forgives him, and receives him again into his favor, does not his being thus freed from the fear of ſuffering, leave full room for his concern at the offence? And does not a ſenſe of his father's love melt his heart more for having grieved ſuch a parent, than any terror upon his mind for the puniſhment of the crime? He is immediately covered with confuſion; and if there be in him any ſpark of ingenuity, he is no ſooner forgiven of his father, than the tide of his affections returns back with full force, and he can hardly forgive himſelf.

But notwithſtanding this, as Chriſt by his ſufferings and death delivered us from the wrath to come, ſo by the ſhedding of his precious blood, the heart is alſo, as the ſcripture expreſſes it, ſprinkled from an evil conſcience. On this important ſubject, which leads us to the great principles of the ſpiritual life, the following particulars are recommended to the ſerious attention of the reader.

1. Through Jeſus Chriſt, and the whole of his undertaking as Mediator of the new covenant, the glory and honor of God is moſt admirably promoted, and a perfect reparation made to his holy law which had been broken. This muſt needs be highly pleaſing to every convinced ſinner. As the juſtice of God is thereby ſatisfied, ſo conſcience, which is God's vicegerent, and as it were pleads his cauſe, is ſatisfied by the ſame means. The ground of a ſinner's diſſatisfaction with himſelf, is the diſhonor done to God. Muſt it not therefore pleaſe and ſatisfy him to ſee this diſhonor ſo perfectly removed, and ſo much of the divine glory ſhining in the work of redemption. All the divine perfections appear there with diſtinguiſhed luſtre; and muſt not this be highly refreſhing to the pardoned criminal? The very holineſs and juſtice of God, which before were terrible to him, are now amiable. He alſo contemplates and adores the divine wiſdom, as it is to be ſeen in the croſs of Chriſt. We are told, that even the celeſtial hoſts have new diſcoveries of the wiſdom of God in this great deſign of providence. "To the intent that "now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places,

"might be known by the church the manifold wiſdom of "God."* How much more muſt the intereſted believer, with peculiar complacency, approve and adore it? But, above all, if that love and mercy which reigns through the whole is glorious to God, muſt it not be delightful to the Chriſtian? God is love; and his tender mercies are over all his other works; but creating and preſerving goodneſs are ſhaded and eclipſed by redeeming love. It is the theme of the praiſes of heaven, where Chriſt, as the object of worſhip, is repreſented as appearing "like a Lamb that "had been ſlain."

2. Believers have peace of conſcience through Chriſt, as their redemption through his blood, ſerves for their own humiliation and ſelf-abaſement, for the manifeſtation of the evil of ſin, and the vileneſs and unworthineſs of the ſinner. Nothing could be ſo well contrived as the doctrine of the croſs, in its purity and ſimplicity, to ſtain the pride of all human glory. We are particularly called to deny ourſelves, and to derive our worth and ſtrength from our Redeemer, in whom "it hath pleaſed the Father, that all "fulneſs ſhould dwell," and from whoſe fulneſs all his diſciples muſt "receive, and grace for grace." No hope of mercy but through him. "I am the way, and the truth, "and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by "me."† "Neither is there ſalvation in any other: for "there is none other name under heaven given among "men, whereby we muſt be ſaved."‡ No acceſs to the throne of grace or acceptance in worſhip, but through him: "In whom we have acceſs with boldneſs and confidence, "through the faith of him.|| And whatſoever ye do in "word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jeſus, "giving thanks to God and the Father by him."* No hope of ſtability in duty, of uſefulneſs, or holineſs of converſation, but by the continued exerciſe of faith in him. "Abide in me, and I in you; as the branch cannot bear "fruit of itſelf, except it abide in the vine, no more can

* Eph. iii. 10. † John xiv. 6. ‡ Acts iv. 12. || Eph. iii. 12.

* Col. iii. 17.

" ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the " branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the " ſame bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can " do nothing."*

Hard ſayings and humbling doctrine indeed! But this is appeaſing to the conſcience; for as conſcience condemns us as guilty and undeſerving, this condemnation is ratified in every particular by the goſpel. Theſe very circumſtances in this doctrine, which provoke the hatred, or invite the contempt of worldly men, do but ſo much the more endear it to the convinced ſoul; and he ſays from the heart, " It is highly juſt and reaſonable that God alone " ſhould be exalted, and that he, through our Redeemer, " ſhould have the whole praiſe of our recovery and ſalva- " tion." Agreeably to this it will be found, that the apoſtles, in celebrating the grace of God, ſeldom omit an expreſs condemnation of themſelves, and a renunciation of all merit of their own, which indeed in every paſſage on this ſubject is manifeſtly implied: " For by grace ye are " ſaved, through faith; and that not of yourſelves, it is " the gift of God: not of works, leſt any man ſhould boaſt: " for we are his workmanſhip, created in Chriſt Jeſus unto " good works, which God hath before ordained that we " ſhould walk in them.† Whereof I was made a mini- " ſter, according to the gift of the grace of God given un- " to me, by the effectual working of his power. Unto " me, who am leſs than the leaſt of all ſaints, is this " grace given, that I ſhould preach among the Gentiles the " unſearchable riches of Chriſt."‡

3. Believers have peace from the challenges of an evil conſcience, through Chriſt, as they have an abſolute aſſurance of being delivered from the power of ſin, and effectually enabled to glorify him with their ſouls and with their bodies, which are his. This muſt be the moſt earneſt deſire of every convinced ſinner. He breathes after deliverance from the bondage of ſin: the more he hath felt the weight of his chains, the more he longs to be free. This is inſeparable from genuine convictions, on the principles

* John xv. 4, 5. † Eph. ii. 8, 9, 10. ‡ Eph. iii. 7, 8.

above laid down. How much muſt it contribute to compoſe the conſcience, to know that this deſire ſhall certainly be accompliſhed? However much cauſe he may have to condemn himſelf for his paſt provocations, or to dread the weakneſs of his own reſolutions of future amendment, he knows and truſts in the power of his Redeemer. He knows that henceforth he ſhall not ſerve ſin, that its dominion ſhall be gradually broken through life, and entirely deſtroyed at death. As the end of Chriſt's coming was to glorify his heavenly Father, he knows that the glory of God cannot be promoted by leaving the ſinner under the bondage of corruption, and therefore that he ſhall be purified, and made meet to be a "partaker of the inheritance "of the ſaints in light."

If we look with care and attention into the New Teſtament, we ſhall perceive that there is a cloſe and mutual connection between our juſtification and ſanctification, and that both are repreſented as the fruit of our Redeemer's purchaſe: "There is therefore now no condemnation to "thoſe that are in Chriſt Jeſus, who walk not after the "fleſh but after the Spirit: for the law of the Spirit of life "in Chriſt Jeſus, hath made me free from the law of ſin "and death: for what the law could not do, in that it was "weak through the fleſh, God ſending his own Son in "the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh, and for ſin condemned ſin in "the fleſh."* All the bleſſings of ſalvation are repreſented as following one another in a continued chain or ſeries, not one link of which can poſſibly be broken: "For whom "he did foreknow, he alſo did predeſtinate to be con-"formed to the image of his Son, that he might be the "firſt-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he "did predeſtinate, them he alſo called; and whom he call-"ed, them he alſo juſtified; and whom he juſtified, them "he alſo glorified."† There is a cleanſing and purifying virtue in the blood of Chriſt, as well as an infinite value in the way of purchaſe and atonement: "For if the blood "of bulls, and of goats, and the aſhes of an heifer ſprink-"ling the unclean, ſanctifieth to the purifying of the fleſh;

* Rom. viii. 1, 2, 3. † Rom. viii. 29, 30.

" how much more ſhall the blood of Chriſt, who through " the eternal Spirit offered himſelf without ſpot to God, " purge your conſcience from dead works to ſerve the " living God ?"*

None but real Chriſtians, exerciſed in the ſpiritual life, know the value or neceſſity of the promiſes of ſtrength and aſſiſtance contained in the ſcriptures. The glory of their Redeemer's perſon, ſpoken of in ſo magnificent terms, both in the Old Teſtament and the New, is ſurveyed by them with the moſt exquiſite delight. The power and efficacy of his adminiſtration, is to them a ſource of unſpeakable comfort. Under him, as the Captain of their ſalvation, they " diſplay their banners," and go forth with undaunted courage to meet every oppoſing enemy, believing that they ſhall be " more than conquerors through him that " loved them." Among many others, ſee the two following paſſages: " O Zion that bringeſt good tidings, get " thee up into the high mountain: O Jeruſalem, that " bringeſt good tidings, lift up thy voice with ſtrength, " lift it up, be not afraid: ſay unto the cities of Judah, " Behold your God. Behold, the Lord God will come " with ſtrong hand, and his arm ſhall rule for him: be- " hold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. " He ſhall feed his flock like a ſhepherd; he ſhall gather " the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his boſom, " and ſhall gently lead thoſe that are with young.†—Fear " thou not, for I am with thee: be not diſmayed, for I am " thy God: I will ſtrengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, " yea, I will uphold thee with the right-hand of my righte- " ouſneſs. Behold, all they that were incenſed againſt " thee, ſhall be aſhamed and confounded: they ſhall be " as nothing, and they that ſtrive with thee, ſhall periſh. " Thou ſhalt ſeek them, and ſhalt not find them, even " them that contended with thee: they that war againſt " thee, ſhall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought. For " I the Lord thy God will hold thy right-hand, ſaying un- " to thee, Fear not, I will help thee.‡

* Heb. ix. 13, 14. † Iſ. xl. 9, 10, 11, ‡ Iſ. xli. 10, 11, 12, 13.

SECT. VII.

How the Christian is governed in his daily conversation.

BEFORE concluding this chapter, I shall speak a few words of the principles by which a believer is governed in his after obedience. On this the reader may observe, that a change in his whole character and conduct immediately and necessarily takes place. The love of God is "shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost," and is the commanding principle of all his future actions. It constantly discovers its influence, except in so far as it is resisted and counteracted by the remaining struggles of that "law in his members, which warreth against the law of "God in his mind." By the discovery which he hath obtained of the real nature and infinite amiableness of God, his will is renewed; he approves the things that are excellent, and gets such an impression of the obligation of the law of God, as cannot be afterwards effaced. So long however as he continues under a load of unforgiven guilt, and sees every perfection of God armed with terror against himself, there can be little else than slavish fear: but when he hears a gracious promise of pardon; when on examining the evidence his doubt and uncertainty is removed; when he sees the righteous ground on which this forgiveness is built, he lays hold of it as his own, and is united to God by unfeigned love. This love, though weak in its measure, is, notwithstanding, perfect in its nature, and therefore powerful in its influence; being at once a love of esteem, of gratitude, and of desire.

The love of God is the first precept of the moral law, and the first duty of every intelligent creature; but it is easy to see, that unless our love is fixed upon the true God, it is spurious and unprofitable: and unless the true God is seen in "the face of Jesus Christ," for any sinner to love him is impossible: but through the glorious gospel, the new nature is effectually produced, and cannot be produced in any other way. It is Christ Jesus who reveals to us the true God, the knowledge of whom we had lost. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son,

" which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared " him*." It is he who makes our peace with God, whom we had offended by our transgressions; for " being justifi- " ed by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord " Jesus Christ†." And it is he who reconcileth our minds to God, by discovering his mercy to us; so that he might well say of himself, " I am the way, and the truth, " and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by " me‡."

I might easily shew, that the love of God is the source, the sum, and the perfection of holiness. All other duties naturally flow from it; nay, all other duties are nothing else but the necessary expressions of it. But instead of entering into a particular detail, suffer me only to observe these two things; First, that a believer is under the constant influence of gratitude to God; and, secondly, That this includes in it, and will certainly produce, the most sincere and fervent love to all his fellow-creatures.

1. A believer is under the constant influence of gratitude to God, and that not of a common kind. It is not merely thankfulness to a bountiful and liberal benefactor, for mercies which have not been deserved, but a deep sense of obligation to a Saviour, who loved him, and washed him in his own blood from the guilt he had contracted; who saved him by his own death from the dreadful penalty which he had incurred. What the influence of this must be, we may gather from the words of the apostle Paul, " For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we " thus judge, That if one died for all, then were all dead; " and that he died for all, that they which live should not " henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which " died for them, and rose again.

I cannot immediately drop this subject, but intreat the reader to observe how deeply a sense of redeeming love must be engraven on the heart of every believer. On how many circumstances will he expatiate, which serve to magnify the grace of God, and point out the force of his own obligations? The infinite greatness and glory of

* John i. 18. † Rom. v. 1. ‡ John. xiv. 6.

God, independent and all-ſufficient, that he ſhould have compaſſion on the guilty ſinner, and ſay, "Deliver him "from going down into the pit; I have found a ranſom." O, how piercing thoſe rays of love, which could reach from the Godhead to man! To this he will never fail to add his own unworthineſs his numerous, aggravated, repeated provocations. He never loſes ſight of thoſe ſins which firſt compelled him to fly for refuge "to the hope "ſet before him." His own intereſt obliged him to remember them before, as expoſing him to condemnation, and he is now willing to confeſs and record them, as ſerving to illuſtrate the divine mercy.

And let us never forget the unſpeakable gift of God, "that he ſpared not his own ſon, but delivered him up for "us all." How ſhall we ſufficiently wonder at the boundleſs mercy of the Father, and the infinite condeſcenſion of the Son, when we reflect upon his incarnation, and on the aſtoniſhing end of his appearance in our nature, that he might "bear our ſins in his own body on the tree." Did he overcome all his enemies in his laſt conflict, and "make a ſhew of them openly, triumphing over them in "his croſs?" And ſhall he not alſo, by the ſame means, reign in his people's hearts, and be the ſovereign Lord of all their affections?

To all this, I ſhall only add that glorious inheritance, which is provided for every "veſſel of mercy," after he hath paſſed his preparatory trials. How well may we join with the apoſtle Peter in this ſolemn form of thankſgiving, "Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, "which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten "us again by the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt from the "dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and "that fadeth not away*." Now, when all theſe circumſtances are conſidered by the believer, together with ſuch as may be peculiar to himſelf and his own paſt conduct, muſt he not be ready to cry out, "Lord, what wilt thou "have me to do! O that I knew how I might repay ſome ſmall part of my infinite obligations! O that I knew

* 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

" by what means, or at what expence I might magnify and " do thee honor! Write thy laws in my heart, and put " them in my inward parts, and enable me in every poſ- " ſible way to ſhew that I love thee, becauſe thou haſt firſt " loved me."

2. This plainly includes in it, and will certainly produce the moſt ſincere and fervent love to his fellow-creatures. As love to God is the firſt, ſo love to man is the ſecond commandment of the moral law. We have our Lord's own authority for ſaying it is " like" unto the firſt; and that love which " worketh no ill to his neighbours" is the " fulfilling of the law." Every one is ready to acknowledge, that love to man is an important branch of practical religion. But many great pleaders for this duty do not ſufficiently attend to its inſeparable connection with the love of God, and in particular with a ſenſe of redeeming love, or the love of God in Chriſt: Yet is there no ſuch principle of univerſal love any where to be found?

In order to take a ſhort view of this, it will be proper to diſtinguiſh our brethren of mankind into the two general claſſes of bad men and good. As to bad men, th ſame love to God, the ſame concern for his glory, which fills the Chriſtian with grief and indignation at their moſt daring offences, inſpires the moſt ardent deſire for their recovery and ſalvation. This is the only love to them, which is either acceptable to God or profitable to themſelves. It will ſhew itſelf in all the offices of kindneſs and humanity; in inſtructing them where there is ability, admoniſhing them where there is opportunity, and in pleading for them at the throne of grace, to which there is always undiſturbed acceſs. The believer, knowing the danger of ſin, and having a proſpect of approaching eternity, is moved with compaſſion for blind and inconſiderate ſinners. Their conduct leads him to reflect upon the depravity of his own nature, and earneſtly to pray, that they may be partakers of divine grace.

He that loveth God is under little temptation to hate his brother; or rather, in ſo far as he loveth God ſincerely, he is under none at all. Hatred commonly ariſeth from

envy and rival purſuits. But a Chriſtian, more than ſatisfied with his own portion, hath no occaſion to envy others, either what they poſſeſs or proſecute. In what a contemptible light does he look upon the honors, riches and pleaſures, about which there is ſo violent a ſtruggle among worldly men? It is impoſſible, therefore, that he ſhould hate thoſe who do not interfere with him, though in many caſes he is diſpoſed heartily to pity their folly and deluſion.

Nay, the matter does not even reſt here, for the Chriſtian is laid under the moſt expreſs command to "love his" perſonal "enemies, to bleſs them that curſe him, to pray "for them who deſpitefully uſe him and perſecute him." This is the glory of the goſpel, which gives the doctrine of Chriſt a luſtre far ſuperior to the moſt admired ſyſtems of human virtue. And however hard a ſaying it may appear at firſt view, when we conſider the character and hopes of a penitent ſinner, and the example of his expiring Saviour, it hath nothing ſtrange or incredible in it at all: That he, who expects from the free grace of God pardon for his innumerable and aggravated offences, ſhould be ready to forgive the far ſlighter treſpaſſes of his brethren againſt himſelf. Or rather, that he ſhould take the higheſt pleaſure, and think it his honor to do ſo, when he remembers his Redeemer's dying words, "Father, for-"give them, for they know not what they do."

As to good men, there is no manner of difficulty: they are united together by the tendereſt and the ſtrongeſt ties, and love one another with a pure heart fervently. It was no wonder, that when Chriſtianity was in a perſecuted ſtate, the heathens ſhould make the remark, "Behold how theſe "Chriſtians love one another!" They had a common character, a common Saviour, common ſufferings, and common hopes. And muſt it not be the ſame ſtill? for "all that will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus muſt ſuffer perſe-"cution." If they are not perſecuted with the ſwords, they ſhall be perſecuted with the tongues of men. They have the ſtrongeſt motives to love one another, and nothing to divide them, for there can be no rivalſhip or jealouſy between thoſe who poſſeſs or court the "true rich-

" es." There is enough in an all-ſufficient God to ſatisfy the deſires of all his ſaints; and they being intimately united to the one only living and true God, muſt of conſequence be united to one another. This is the tenor of their Saviour's interceſſory prayer: " That they all may " be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that " they alſo may be one in us: that the world may believe " that thou haſt ſent me. And the glory which thou gav- " eſt me, I have given them: that they may be one, even " as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they " may be made perfect in one, and that the world may " know that thou haſt ſent me, and haſt loved them as thou " haſt loved me."*

CONCLUSION.

I SHALL now cloſe this diſcourſe with ſome practical improvement of theſe important truths. Several reflections have indeed already been interwoven with the particular branches of the ſubject, and the light which they throw on other parts of religion pointed out. I ſhall therefore at this time only make a few obſervations upon the whole, and proceed to a ſerious addreſs to all my readers on this moſt intereſting ſubject. And,

1ſt, From the various truths above eſtabliſhed, and the order in which they have been opened, we may ſee the indiſſoluble connection between ſalvation by the grace of God, and holineſs in heart and converſation. We may ſee their equal importance and their influence upon one another. There are many who attempt to divide thoſe things which God hath inſeparably joined. Many inſiſt only on the duties of the law of God, and our natural obligations to obedience; and are hardly brought to any mention of the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, as the ground of a ſinner's aceeptance before God. Nay, ſome ſcruple not to affirm that the doctrine of juſtification by free grace, or

* John xvii. 21, 22, 23.

a ſinner's being found in Chriſt, not having his own righteouſneſs, weakens the obligation to holineſs, and tends to introduce licentiouſneſs of practice. But from what hath been ſaid in the above diſcourſe, we may learn, not only in general the abſolute neceſſity of a change, but how this ſtands connected with the purchaſe and gift of ſalvation, the character and work of a Redeemer. It will plainly appear, that a change in ſome reſpects is neceſſary to bring us to, and in others is the neceſſary effect and conſequence of, the acceptance of ſalvation.

I have endeavored in the preceding pages to ſhew, that a diſcovery of the nature and glory of God, and of the infinite evil of ſin, is abſolutely neceſſary, in order to our either underſtanding or reliſhing the doctrine of the croſs. What is this then, but a change begun? Muſt not the dominion of ſin in every ſuch perſon have received a mortal blow? Doth any thing more directly tend to holineſs, than to ſee the power and glory of a holy God, and how "evil and bitter a thing" it is to depart from him? On the other hand, is it not neceſſary to complete the change, that there be a ſenſe of reconciliation and peace? "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" Can any perſon live in the love and ſervice of God, while he conceives him to be his enemy, and ſuppoſes himſelf ſtill the object of his wrath and diſpleaſure? But ſuppoſing this reconciliation obtained, let me boldly aſk, What motive to holineſs in all manner of converſation, equal to the force of redeeming love? Judge, O Chriſtian, will any cold reaſoning on the nature and beauty of virtue have ſuch an effect in mortifying corruptions, as a believing view of a pierced Saviour? Where ſhall we find ſo faithful, ſo active, ſo chearful a ſervant of God, as one who joins with the apoſtle Paul in ſaying, "I am crucified "with Chriſt: nevertheleſs I live; yet not I, but Chriſt "liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the fleſh, "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and "gave himſelf for me."* Faith in Chriſt Jeſus never can take place in any heart, unleſs there has been an internal

* Gal. ii. 20.

work of the Spirit of God teſtifying of him; and there is no effectual principle of new obedience, but faith which worketh by love.

2. What has been ſaid above, will ſerve to explain ſome controverſies with which the truths of the goſpel have been often darkened and perplexed; particularly thoſe relating to the priority, or right of precedency, ſo to ſpeak, between faith and repentance. Some make repentance, that is, as they explain it, ſorrow for ſin, ſerious reſolutions of forſaking it, and begun reformation, the joint grounds of our acceptance with the merit of a Saviour. Theſe, with great plauſibility, ſtate the matter thus: That our ſincerity is accepted through the ſatisfaction of Chriſt, inſtead of that perfect obedience to which we cannot now attain; and, when taken in a certain light, this aſſertion is undoubtedly true. Others, diſcerning the falſhood that may lurk under this repreſentation, and fearing the conſequences of every ſelf-righteous plan, are tempted to go to the oppoſite extreme. That they might ſhew ſalvation to be wholly of grace, ſome have even preſumed to uſe this harſh and unſcriptural expreſſion, that it is not neceſſary to forſake ſin in order to come to Chriſt. I could ſhew a ſenſe in which this alſo is true, even as it is not neceſſary to forſake your diſeaſe, in order to apply to the phyſician. But if it is not neceſſary to forſake it, I am ſure it is neceſſary, in both caſes, to hate it, and deſire deliverance from it.

This difficulty will be eaſily ſolved from what has been ſaid in the preceding parts of this treatiſe, and we may learn to preſerve the truth, without expoſing it to the ſcorn or reſentment of its enemies. The reader may obſerve, then, that none can ſee the form or comelineſs of a Saviour ſtanding in the room of ſinners, and purchaſing forgiveneſs from a holy God, till the glory of this God is diſcovered, till the guilt of ſin lays hold of the conſcience, and its power is both felt and lamented. This may, perhaps, be called repentance, and I believe it is called ſo ſometimes in the holy ſcriptures, particularly in the following paſſage:

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your ſins "may be blotted out, when the times of refreſhing ſhall "come from the preſence of the Lord."* But the ſinner does not ſo properly forſake ſin in order to come to Chriſt, as he flies to him for deliverance from its condemning guilt and enſlaving power. He is ſo far from coming to God with a gift in his hand, even of his own prayers and penitential tears, that his convictions continue to follow him, if I may ſpeak ſo, through every lurking place, till he is entirely ſubjected, till he is ſtript naked and bare, and deprived of every ſhadow of excuſe. Then it is that ſalvation through a deſpiſed crucified Saviour becomes unſpeakably amiable in all its parts, ſin becomes more perfectly hateful, and an aſſured proſpect is obtained of its immediate mortification, and, in due time, of its entire and complete deſtruction. Thus faith and repentance are involved in one another, they produce, and are produced by one another. They may be treated of diſtinctly, but they cannot exiſt ſeparately. So that whenever any of them is found alone, or ſtands independent of the other, that very thing is a ſufficient evidence that it is falſe and ſpurious.

3. From what has been ſaid on this ſubject, we may be enabled to judge what are the fundamental and eſſential doctrines of the goſpel, to which all others are but ſubordinate and ſubſervient. Regeneration, or the New Birth, we are warranted to ſay, after the example of our Saviour, is abſolutely neceſſary to ſalvation: "Except a man be "born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of God." If any man, therefore, depart from this truth, he makes ſhipwreck of the faith, and will at laſt be found to fight againſt God. It is alſo plain, that the reconciliation of a ſinner to God muſt be through the blood of the atonement: "For other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, "which is Jeſus Chriſt."† If any man hold by, and build upon, this great foundation he ſhall be finally accepted, though many things may be found in him juſtly

* Acts iii. 19. † 1 Cor. iii. 11.

blame-worthy. Nor is it eaſy, indeed, to ſay what degree of error and miſapprehenſion concerning theſe truths themſelves, may be conſiſtent with abiding by the ſubſtance. But certainly all who directly and openly oppoſe them, may be ſaid "to bring in damnable hereſies, even "denying the Lord that bought them, and to bring upon "themſelves ſwift deſtruction."*

This may teach us, what judgment Chriſtians ought to form of the many parties and factions which divide the viſible church. There may be ſmaller differences, which keep them aſunder on earth, while, in faith and in love to an unſeen Saviour, they are perfectly united. We are told that God ſhall gather his elect from the four winds, and that "many ſhall come from the eaſt and weſt, and "ſhall ſit down with Abraham, and Iſaac, and Ja-"cob, in the kingdom of heaven."† I always think with much pleaſure on the perfect union of this great and general aſſembly of the church of the firſt born. Then all other diſtinctions, all other deſignations ſhall be aboliſhed, and thoſe ſhall make one pure and unmixed ſociety, who have received "a white ſtone and a new "name," and "whoſe names are written in the Lamb's "book of life." The proſpect of this ſhould keep us from immoderate reſentment, at preſent, againſt any of whom we have reaſon to think that they hold the foundation, are acquainted with real and practical religion, or have had experience of a ſaving change.

No man, indeed, can deny it to be juſt, that every one would endeavor to ſupport that plan of the diſcipline and government of the church of Chriſt, and even the minuteſt parts of it, which appear to him to be founded upon the word of God. But ſtill ſound doctrine is more to be eſteemed than any form. Still we ought to conſider the excellence of every particular form, as conſiſting in its fitneſs to promote or preſerve the knowledge of the truth, and to carry on a work of illumination, conviction, and converſion, to the ſaving of the ſoul. Would any Chriſtian ſhew that he is of a truly catholic diſpoſition, let

* 2 Pet. ii. 1. † Matt. viii. 11.

him diſcover a greater attachment to thoſe even of different denominations, who ſeem to bear the image of God, than to profane perſons, be their apparent or pretended principles what they will. Let us pay ſome regard to other diſtinctions, but ſtill the greateſt regard to the moſt important of all diſtinctions, that of ſaints and ſinners.

4. As this great diſtinction divides the whole human race, and is ſo very important in its conſequences, let me earneſtly intreat every one who peruſeth this treatiſe, to bring the matter to a trial with regard to himſelf. Anſwer this queſtion in ſerioufneſs, Whether do you belong to the one claſs or the other? We are dropping into the grave from day to day, and our ſtate is fixed beyond any poſſibility of change. What aſtoniſhing folly to continue in uncertainty whether we ſhall go to heaven or hell, whether we ſhall be companions of angels, or aſſociates with blaſpheming devils, to all eternity. Nothing, therefore, can be more ſalutary, than that you make an impartial ſearch into your preſent character and ſtate. If you have ground to conclude that you are at peace with God, what an unſpeakable ſource of joy and conſolation? If otherwiſe, there is no time to loſe in haſtening from the brink of the pit. May I not with ſome confidence make this demand of every reader, that he would ſet apart ſome time and apply with vigour and earneſtneſs to the duty of ſelf-examination. Is not this demand reaſonable? What injury can you ſuffer by complying with it; Will conſcience permit any to continue unreproved in the neglect of it? Have you read ſo much on the ſubject of regeneration, and are you unwilling to reap the benefit of it? Let every one, without exception, take up or renew this grand enquiry, "Am I in Chriſt? That is, am I a New Crea-"ture or not? Am I a child of God? or do I ſtill con-"tinue an heir of hell?"

5. As it is more than probable there will be ſome readers who are, or have reaſon to ſuſpect, themſelves unrenewed, I would now come as an ambaſſador from Chriſt, and endeavor to negociate peace. Wherefore "as though "God did beſeech you by me, I pray you in Chriſt's

" ſtead, be ye reconciled unto God."* While I attempt this, I deſire to do it under a juſt impreſſion of the great and principal truths which have been illuſtrated on this ſubject. I know that this change is a work of the Holy Spirit of grace; that he only can bring a clean thing out of an unclean; that without his effectual bleſſing, the cleareſt and moſt concluſive reaſoning directed to the underſtanding, the moſt warm and pathetic application to the affections, will be altogether fruitleſs. I know that great natural abilities are often perverted and abuſed, that the ſoundeſt reaſon in worldly things, and the moſt brutiſh folly in matters of eternity, are often joined together. That men may be learned ſcholars, eminent politicians, active merchants, ſkilful tradeſmen, and yet blinded ſinners, whom no inſtruction can enlighten, whom no warning can alarm. But I know and believe, at the ſame time, that God, " whom I ſerve with my ſpirit in the goſpel of " his Son," is able to make " his word quick and powerful, " ſharper than a two-edged ſword, piercing even to the " dividing aſunder of ſoul and ſpirit, and of the joints and " marrow, and a diſcerner of the thoughts and intents of " the heart."† There is an expreſs appointment that the wicked ſhall " receive warning," and in this way alone the watchman can " deliver his own ſoul." It is alſo agreeable to reflect, that when God giveth " a door of ut- " terance," he is alſo often pleaſed to give " a door of faith," which I pray may be the caſe with many who read this diſcourſe, for Chriſt's ſake.

Let me, therefore, repeat in your ears this truth, and may God Almighty by his Spirit carry it to your hearts, that " except a man be born again, he cannot enter into " the kingdom of God." Every child of Adam, by nature, is at enmity with God, and muſt either be renewed in the ſpirit of his mind, or periſh eternally. It is of no conſequence what you are as to outward ſtation, if you are not reconciled to God; it is of no conſequence what you are as to outward profeſſion, if you are not inwardly changed. God is no reſpecter of perſons, and, therefore,

* 2 Cor. v. 20. † Heb. iv. 12.

whether you are high or low, rich or poor, whether you are of one denomination of Chriſtians or another, if you have not been the ſubjects of a renewing and ſanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, you are children of wrath, and, if you die in that condition, muſt "go away into everlaſt-"ing puniſhment." To reflect ſeriouſly but for a few moments on this truth, and that every one of us is ſo deeply concerned in it, one would think might be ſufficient to alarm us all, either for ourſelves or for others, or for both. Who could imagine that this weak fleſh, ſo frail in its nature, and ſo eaſily taken to pieces, ſhould yet ſo harden us againſt the impreſſion of approaching eternity. But is there any hope of relief? Yes there is, and that as univerſal as the danger. The commiſſion is unlimited, "Go "ye into all the world, and preach the GOSPEL to every "CREATURE."*

In order to make this exhortation the more diſtinct and effectual, I ſhall endeavor to addreſs it in a particular and ſeparate manner to the following claſſes: The Rich and the Poor; the Young and the Old; the Self-righteous and the Chief of Sinners.

I would preach the everlaſting goſpel to the Rich and Affluent, on whom (as the world chooſes to expreſs it) fortune ſmiles, who are well and plentifully ſupplied with every preſent conveniency. The prophet Jeremiah, in trying the ſucceſs of his meſſage, ſays, "I will get me un-"to the great men, and will ſpeak unto them."† It is, indeed, a matter of no ſmall difficulty often to perſuade ſuch to hear the truths of the goſpel. Let them not be offended while I mention the words of our bleſſed Saviour, "Verily I ſay unto you, that a rich man ſhall hardly en-"ter into the kingdom of heaven." And again, "I ſay "unto you, it is eaſier for a camel to go through the eye of "a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom "of God."‡ When the world is pleaſant and inviting, it is ready to ingroſs our attention, to poſſeſs our eſteem, and to attract our homage. Worldly grandeur is very ready to inſpire the mind with pride and ſelf-ſufficiency,

* Mark xvi. 15. † Jer. v. 5. ‡ Matt. xix. 23, 24.

which is, of all other things, the moſt deſtructive of real religion, and which is particularly oppoſite to the humbling and ſelf-abaſing doctrine of ſalvation by grace. The great and faſhionable world is ſtill in danger of the offence of the croſs. Denying themſelves, bearing profane ſcorn, mortifying the fleſh, loving and following a crucified maſter, are hard leſſons, indeed, to men of wealth and affluence.

But ſuffer me to warn all ſuch, not to "truſt in uncer-"tain riches." Place not your happineſs in ſo unſtable a poſſeſſion. How ſtrong, as well as how juſt, the wiſe man's expreſſions! "Wilt thou ſet thine eyes upon that "which is not: for riches certainly make themſelves wings, "they fly away as an eagle towards heaven."* Behold, I preach the goſpel to you, and offer you the true riches. However pride may make you fondly flatter yourſelves, however your greatneſs or wealth may deter others from treating you with plainneſs and ſincerity, you are ſinners of the race of Adam, you are loſt in him by nature, you are tranſgreſſors in practice, and liable to divine wrath, from which there is no ſhelter but in the blood of Chriſt. It is but a very little time that your worldly greatneſs can endure. Death ſhall write vanity on all created glory; and nothing elſe ſhall ſcreen you from the wrath of the Almighty Judge in the laſt and great day. There the rich and the poor, the priſoner and the oppreſſor, ſhall ſtand upon a level before the Maker of them all. Embrace then, while you may, the mercy of God. Put on the ſpotleſs robe of your Redeemer's righteouſneſs, and value it more than purple and fine linen, or the moſt coſtly attire. Seek the bread of life which came down from heaven, and value it more highly than the moſt ſumptuous and delicate fare. Be not aſhamed of a crucified Saviour. Endure with a noble firmneſs the diſdainful ſmiles of a ſcoffing world. O! how amiable is the union of high ſtation and piety, honor and humility, wealth and ſelf-denial, with a reſolute profeſſion of the goſpel! Bleſſed is

* Prov. xxiii. 5.

the memory of Joſeph of Arimathea, an honorable man, and a counſellor, who boldly begged, and honorably interred the body of our Lord, after it had been crucified at the inſtigation of corrupt prieſts, and pierced by the inhumanity of brutal ſoldiers. May the Lord God of nature bleſs and increaſe your ſubſtance, and make every thing you do to proſper, but in his mercy deliver you from deſpiſing the goſpel, dying impenitent, and lifting up your eyes in torments.

2. Let me preach this goſpel to the Poor. It was the glory of the goſpel that it was preached to the Poor, and given by our Saviour himſelf as one of the marks of the Meſſiah's arrival, that "the goſpel was preached to the "poor." Very ſuitable was this to their ſtate, good news were brought to them in their diſtreſs. But think not, my brethren, that your being poor is enough of itſelf. It may, indeed, preſerve you from many temptations to which the rich are expoſed, and it ought, one would think, to conſtrain you to ſeek to be rich towards God. But, alas! this is not always the caſe, and, when it is otherwiſe, how does it make every conſiderate heart bleed with compaſſion and tenderneſs! O! unhappy they who are both poor and profane, miſerable in time and miſerable to eternity, deſpiſed on earth, and outcaſts for ever. Pitiable caſe indeed!

But does not the Saviour of ſinners beſeech you to be reconciled unto God. He intreats you to come unto him that you may have life. He regardeth not the perſons of men, but values a precious immortal ſpirit as much in a mean cottage as in a ſplendid palace. Your rags and nakedneſs can be no hindrance to your obtaining his favor. He counſels you "to buy of him gold tried in the fire, "that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you "may be clothed." But O! conſider that you are naturally much more lothſome by ſin than by poverty. Humble yourſelves deeply in the ſight of God. Fly for refuge to lay hold of the hope ſet before you. Accept of a free pardon of all your ſins through the blood of Chriſt, and of his Holy Spirit to enable you to love and ſerve him. Rejoice in your portion as all-ſufficient and full, and in

the covenant of peace, as "ordered in all things, and "ſure." Go in the ſpirit of adoption to your reconciled Father in Chriſt, and aſk of him your daily bread. Do not envy the proſperity of others; ſince it is not material whether you ſhall live in plenty and ſleep on a bed of down, or live in ſtraits and lie on a dunghil, compared to what ſhall become of you for ever. But, above all, be not ſo mad as to envy ſinners an unſanctified proſperity. Rather, when you ſee a man of opulence deſpiſing the ſabbath, or hear a wretch in a gilded chariot profaning his Creator's name, be ready to ſay, "Shall I complain "of poverty, when my Lord and maſter had not where "to lay his head? No, let me, on the contrary, bleſs that "adverſity which cauſed me to conſider. Let me be very "thankful for that humble ſtation which gives me acceſs "to communion with God, and does not waſte my time "with crouds of company. Who knoweth whether I "ſhould have retained my integrity, if I had been con-"ſtantly ſurrounded with profane gaiety, ſwimming in plea-"ſure, beſieged by flatterers, ſolicited by ſenſualiſts, be-"ſet with temptations? O that I may be poſſeſſed of the "pearl of great price, reconciled to God, united to Chriſt, "adorned with Divine grace, and that I may be my Re-"deemer's at his ſecond coming."

3. I would preach the goſpel to thoſe who are but yet in the Morning of life. This is the moſt pleaſant and hopeful part of a miniſter's work. Happy are you, my dear Children, who have been ſo early called into God's vineyard, but infinitely more happy, if you are inwardly and fully determined to comply with the call. I beſeech you "Remember you Creator in the days of your youth, "while the evil days come not, nor the years draw "nigh, when you ſhall ſay you have no pleaſure in "them."* Early piety is exceeding lovely in the eyes of the ſober part of mankind, highly acceptable to God, and will be infinitely profitable to yourſelves. Be not enticed with the deceitful promiſes and falſe pretences of worldly enjoyments, which are ſo ready to inflame your

* Eccleſ. xii. 1.

paſſions, and ſo warmly ſolicit your love. Believe the teſtimony of all, without exception, who have gone before you, and have left this record written on created comforts, that they are "vanity and vexation of ſpirit." Believe it, you have entered on a world of ſin and ſorrow. You may feel the early ſtirrings of corruption in yourſelves, and ſee its manifeſt and manifold fruits, both in yourſelves and others. Alas! are there not ſome young perſons who learn, as their firſt language, to blaſpheme their Maker's name? Many children who cannot work, are expert in ſinning. Alas! your hearts are naturally far from God. You "go aſtray as ſoon as you are born, "ſpeaking lies."

Be perſuaded, therefore, to fly to the blood of Chriſt, the precious blood of Chriſt, "who loved you, and gave "himſelf for you." He died upon the croſs to ſave you from the hell which you have deſerved by your ſins; and he graciouſly invites you, ſaying, "Suffer the little chil-"dren to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of ſuch "is the kingdom of God."* Bleſſed are thoſe children, who, like their Saviour, advance in wiſdom as in ſtature, and "in favor with God and man." Let young perſons in general remember, as they are growing up, that all the early opportunities of inſtruction which they have enjoyed, eſpecially ſuch as have been brought up under the inſpection of pious parents, will greatly aggravate their guilt, if they continue to deſpiſe them. For this reaſon ſome, I wiſh I could not ſay many, are old in ſin, when they are but young in years. Wherefore, without further delay, betake yourſelves to God in Chriſt; learn and love your Redeemer's name, and let the life that you live in the fleſh, be a life of faith on the Son of God and only Saviour of the world. Your early entrance on a religious life will make you regular, eſtabliſhed, uſeful, fruitful Chriſtians. If you are to continue long in the world, it will greatly contribute to the ſweetneſs and ſerenity of life; and if it be the will of God that you ſhould die ſoon, it will make you meet for the inheritance of the ſaints in light. There is ſomething very terrible in the death (often the unex-

* Mark x. 14.

pected death) of young persons, in the bloom or middle of life, plunged in sensuality, inflamed with lust, and bent on sin of every kind. But, blessed be God, there are also some agreeable instances of young saints quickly ripened by divine grace, thoroughly mellowed by early affliction, resigning the world, not with submission only, but pleasure, and taking wing to a land of rest and peace, where "the "inhabitants shall not say, I am sick;" and "the people "that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity."*

4. I must now preach the gospel to those who are Old, who having gone through many vicissitudes, are perhaps tottering upon the brink of the grave, and drawing near to "the house appointed for all living." And I do it because my office obliges me to preach the gospel to every creature. There is but little pleasure in addressing such, because there is but little hope of success. May I not suppose, that some one, or more, may be led to peruse this discourse, who have many years resisted the calls of the gospel, and have been long accustomed to do evil. What cause have you to admire the mercy of God, that you are not now "in the "lake which burns with fire and brimstone for evermore?" Have you not followed many of your equals in age to the church-yard, and committed their bodies to the dust? What preparation have you made, in consequence of the reprieve allowed you, and the admonitions given you? Hear then, once more, the joyful sound: Believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may have life through his name. Fly to his blood, that you may obtain the forgiveness of your sins, and an inheritance among them who are sanctified. He, and none else, is able to deliver you. Cry to him, that he may breathe upon the dry bones, and they shall live. Though you are hardened in profanity, though you are besotted in sensuality, though earthly-mindedness has overspread you like a leprosy, his right-hand and his holy arm will get him the victory. He is able to create you anew unto good works; and, as you are already monuments of his patience and forbearance, to make you to eternity the happy monuments of his sovereign

* Is. xxxiii. 24.

and almighty grace. Is there now any remaining objection? Is there yet any room for farther delay? Hath not time ſhed its hoary hairs upon your heads, and drawn its furrows upon your brows? Make haſte then, and fly for your lives, leſt you lie down in ſorrow, and make your bed in hell.

5. Let me preach the goſpel to the Self-righteous. By the ſelf-righteous, I mean thoſe who truſt in an outward, lifeleſs form of duties, in a character formed upon worldly prudence, and a few of the moſt common offices of civility between man and man; eſpecially thoſe, if any ſuch have perſiſted in reading this diſcourſe to the cloſe, who deſpiſe the doctrines of the grace of God. Do any of you lean to the faſhionable ſcheme of irreligious, pretended morality; and when you are at liberty, treat the doctrine of free grace, and of Chriſt's righteouſneſs and merit, with contempt and ſcorn. As the full ſoul lotheth the honeycomb, ſo the ſelf-righteous ſoul ſpurns at the riches of divine mercy, and likes not the inceſſant repetition of the name of Chriſt. Your guilt is of the darkeſt and deepeſt dye. Your danger it is impoſſible to conceive or expreſs. What views have you in drawing near to a holy God in ſolemn worſhip? Or what meeting do you expect with God, when he ſitteth upon the throne of his holineſs in the day of judgment? Do you ever, though in the ſlighteſt manner, make conſcience of the duty of ſelf-examination? May I not have ſome hold of you by that quarter? What ſatisfaction have you in your own hearts? Dare you tell us now what paſſes there? O the power of ſelf-deceit! You would be covered with confuſion, did but the world know the foul pollution that lodges within you: how much leſs ſhall you be able to ſtand, the ſtrict and impartial judgment of the great Searcher of hearts?

Do but open the book of God, and what page will not condemn you? This ſentence ſtands uncancelled againſt you, "Curſed is every one, that continueth not in all "things that are written in the book of the law to do them. "Out of your own mouths will you be judged, ye wicked "ſervants. Thou that makeſt thy boaſt of the law, "through breaking the law, diſhonoreſt thou God?"

Bring forth your boaſted morality, and let it be put to the trial. Will you, or dare you ſay, "I have loved the "Lord with all my heart, with all my ſoul, with all my "mind, and with all my ſtrength?" Will you ſay, I have loved his worſhip, and ſerved him in public, in my family, and in ſecret, and I hope he will accept of it? I think I am authoriſed to anſwer in his name, "Was it "worſhipping me to be ſinging pſalms with your mouths, "and not once remembering their meaning? to be think- "ing of an hundred vain things when you were in the "houſe of God? To be praiſing without thankfulneſs, "confeſſing without ſorrow, and aſking bleſſings without "deſiring them; and to be more attentive to the faces and "dreſſes of others around you, than to the frame of your "own hearts? Was it hearing my word, to be criticiſing "the ſtile and manner of the ſpeaker, and laying hold, "with the utmoſt eagerneſs, of every improper motion or "ill-choſen expreſſion, as a fund of entertainment for your- "ſelves and your companions over your cups and bowls? "Or do you call your careleſs, haſty, drowſy prayers, "with long intermiſſions, worſhipping me in ſecret?

But perhaps you will rather chooſe to truſt to the duties of the ſecond table, and what you owe to your neighbor. Perhaps you will ſay, I have been honeſt in all my dealings, and never wronged any man: nay, I have been kind and charitable, have dealt my bread to the hungry, and ſupplied the wants of the afflicted and poor. I anſwer, in the name of God, "Many have been your defects "even in theſe duties; but ſuppoſing it to be ſo, you have "not feared me. It might be from pride, from fear of "cenſure, from prudence; but it was not in obedience to "me, for I was not in all your thoughts. Was it your "duty to your neighbour, to make a mock at his ſins, to "lead him into intemperance, to deſpiſe him in your "hearts, and ridicule him in your converſation?" In one word, do but examine all your "righteouſneſſes," they will "be found as filthy rags before God." Truſt not in ſuch a "refuge of lies.——The bed is ſhorter than "that a man can ſtretch himſelf on it, and the covering

" narrower than that he can wrap himſelf in it."* Believe it, there is no ſalvation in any other than in Chriſt. His atoning blood will reconcile you to God: his grace and love will captivate your ſouls: his holy and bleſſed Spirit will write his laws in your hearts. Believe in him, and you will be more holy than ever, and yet ſtand aſtoniſhed at your profane and blind pride and vanity. He will create in you a clean heart, and you will then bluſh at the thoughts of your remaining pollution. You will apply yourſelves to his ſervice with zeal and diligence, and yet ſtill ſay you are unprofitable ſervants. One view of the croſs of Chriſt will make ſin more odious than a thouſand fine deſcriptions of the beauty of virtue, which commonly ſerve only to nouriſh and fortify the pride of man. If ever you deſire to ſee the face of God in mercy, or to dwell in his preſence, believe in Chriſt, for there is no other *way* to the Father.

6. In the laſt place, ſuffer me to preach the goſpel to the Chief of ſinners. It is the glory of our Redeemer, that he ſaves " to the uttermoſt all that come to God by him." The dignity of his perſon, the greatneſs of his ſufferings, and the infinite value of his atonement founded on both, makes him " mighty to ſave." Let ſuch ſinners attend to this, who are without excuſe, whoſe hearts have been a ſink of the greateſt impurity, whoſe lives are ſtained with the fouleſt and groſſeſt crimes, whoſe ſins have been numerous and heinous, and ſcandalous; who have no plea to offer, but are ſenſible that they have juſtly merited the wrath of God in its utmoſt rigor. Let ſuch attend to this, as are trembling at the thoughts of a righteous judgment, and ſaying, " It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of " the living God.——Men and brethren, what ſhall we do?" Behold, I bring you good tidings of mercy unmerited, pardon unſolicited, a full and free remiſſion of all your ſins. " I have blotted out thine iniquities as a cloud, " and as a thick cloud thy ſins: return unto me, for I " have redeemed thee." Receive this teſtimony, and " ſet to your ſeal that God is true."

* Iſ. xxviii. 20.

Think not to do injury to the grace of God, by weaving a ſelf-righteous cobweb, and refuſing to believe, till you have laid down ſome rules of a new life, and effected ſome partial reformation, as if you would firſt ſave yourſelves, that you may be fit for ſalvation by Chriſt. Theſe hopes will ſoon be daſhed in pieces. Faith in the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt is the ſinner's only plea. The more vile you are in your own apprehenſion, the more need you have "to put on Chriſt." The ſubſequent change of heart and practice muſt be the effect of his power, is a part of his purchaſe, and ought to be received as his gracious gift. And I will venture to foretel, that you will make the greater progreſs in true holineſs, the leſs you are diſpoſed to boaſt of, or to truſt in it.

This, I apprehend, is the goſpel itſelf, ſtiled in ſcripture, with the higheſt propriety, the "goſpel of the grace "of God." "Chriſt came not to call the righteous, but "ſinners to repentance." If you will rely on him for ſalvation, he will ſhed abroad the love of God in your hearts by the Holy Ghoſt, which will be a powerful and operative principle of new obedience. I beſeech you therefore, in the moſt earneſt manner, not to reject the counſel of God againſt yourſelves. Nothing can be more liberal, or more gracious, than the offer of the goſpel: "I will give "to him that is athirſt of the fountain of the water of life "freely." There is no ſin of ſo deep a dye, or ſo infectious a ſtain, but the blood of Chriſt is ſufficient to waſh it out. There is not any ſlave of Satan ſo loaded with chains, but he is able to ſet him free. If you periſh, it is of yourſelves. I have given you warning, from a ſincere and ardent concern for your everlaſting intereſt; and may God himſelf, for Chriſt's ſake, by his Holy Spirit, effectually perſuade you to comply with it.

THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF SALVATION THROUGH CHRIST.

A

SERMON,

Preached before the Society in Scotland for propagating Christian Knowledge, in the High Church of Edinburgh, on Monday, January 2, 1758.

ACTS, iv. 12.

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.

IT is not eaſy to conceive any ſubject, at once more important in itſelf, more ſeaſonable in this age, and more ſuited to the deſign of the preſent meeting, than the abſolute neceſſity of ſalvation through CHRIST. We live in an age in which (as is often complained) infidelity greatly prevails; but yet in which the cauſe of truth hath much leſs to fear from the aſſaults of its open enemies, than from the treachery of its pretended advocates. The lateſt infidel writers have carried their own ſcheme to ſuch perfection or extravagance, that it muſt diſcredit the cauſe in the eye of every ſober judge.* And indeed the

* See David Hume's writings on morals throughout; where, beſides leaving out entirely our duty to God, which he hath in common with many other late writers, he expreſsly founds juſtice upon power and conveniency, derides chaſtity, and turns many of the moſt important virtues into vices. See alſo Eſſays on the principles of morality and natural religion; the author of which, at one deciſive blow, takes away

goſpel can ſcarcely receive a greater injury, than when any profeſſing attachment to it, condeſcend to enter the liſts with ſuch abſurdities, or give ground of ſuſpicion that they ſtand in need of a ſerious refutation.

But there is another quarter from which we have much greater reaſon to apprehend danger, viz. that claſs of men, who, being nominal Chriſtians, diſguiſe or alter the goſpel, in order to defend it. Theſe often endeavor to give ſuch views of Chriſtianity, as will render it palatable to a corrupt worldly mind; and inſtead of abaſing, will ſooth and gratify the pride of man. Hence the unnatural mixture often to be ſeen of modern philoſophy with ancient Chriſtianity. Hence the fundamental doctrines of the goſpel are ſoftened, concealed, or denied; as, the loſt and guilty ſtate of man by nature, his liableneſs to everlaſting miſery, and the neceſſity of that ſatisfaction and ranſom which was paid by our Redeemer when he died upon the croſs. Inſtead of theſe, are we not many times preſented with a character of Chriſt as a teacher only, and not a Saviour; as one excellently qualified to reform the abuſes that had ſome how or other crept into the world, but the real ſource of which is hardly confeſſed, and never willingly brought into view? Is not our bleſſed Redeemer thereby put on a level, and expreſsly claſſed with mortal reformers? Perhaps indeed, a ſmall compliment of ſuperiority is paid him; which, however, there is reaſon to ſuſpect ariſes more from a prudent compliance with eſtabliſhed faith, than from any inward and cordial eſteem.

What could be reaſonably expected as the effect of ſuch conduct? No other than we find by experience hath actually taken place, that a cauſe ſo ill defended muſt daily loſe ground. The nearer Chriſtianity is brought to the principles of infidels to ſolicit their eſteem, the leſs occaſion will they ſee for it at all; and when it is perverted from

all ſin, by founding virtue on a deluſive feeling. Theſe writings are far from being hurtful in proportion to the intention of their authors: for though the principles contained in them are often retailed in converſation, yet it is only by way of amuſement, on account of their boldneſs or novelty, not one in an hundred appearing to have any ſerious conviction of their truth.

its original purpoſe, it can expect no countenance from its real author. The truth is, if there be no more in the goſpel than many by their language and writings would lead us to conceive, it is of ſmall conſequence whether it be embraced or not; and there can be little merit in a ſociety who have this as the deſign of their union, to ſpread and propagate Chriſtian knowledge. But very different are the ſentiments expreſſed by the apoſtle Peter in the text; where, ſpeaking of Jeſus Chriſt of Nazareth, he ſays, "Neither is there ſalvation in any other: for there is none "other name under heaven given among men whereby "we muſt be ſaved."

I am ſenſible, there are ſome of the very perſons hintedat above, who endeavor to explain away this text, and give it a very different meaning from that in which you will eaſily perceive I underſtand it. They make ſalvation to refer to the cure recorded in the preceding chapter, wrought upon the lame man? as if the apoſtle had ſaid, Neither is there a power of healing in any other, &c. This is but one inſtance among many of the force and conſtraint they put upon Scripture, in order to accommodate it to their own ſentiments. I ſhall not waſte your time by a tedious refutation of this criticiſm, as the ſenſe I affix to the words will be ſufficiently ſupported by what ſhall follow on the ſubject. They appear to me plainly to affirm, that there is no other way by which ſinners of mankind can eſcape everlaſting miſery, but through Chriſt.

In diſcourſing on this ſubject, I propoſe, through divine aſſiſtance,

I. After a little illuſtrating the meaning of the aſſertion, to eſtabliſh and confirm its truth from the word of God.

II. To make a few reflections on this ſcheme, and ſhew, that it is not only moſt ſelf-conſiſtent, but moſt agreeable to the other parts of Scripture, as well as to the viſible ſtate of the world; and therefore that thoſe who, in reaſoning with infidels, depart from it in any meaſure, do thereby betray the cauſe which they profeſs to ſupport.

III. I ſhall make ſome practical improvement of what may be ſaid.

I return to the firſt of theſe.

And as to the meaning of the aſſertion, the word ſaving or ſalvation evidently ſuppoſes a ſtate of miſery from which our deliverance muſt be wrought; and therefore no more than the full meaning of the paſſage is expreſſed in what follows, That all the poſterity of Adam are conceived in ſin, and brought forth in iniquity; alienated in heart from the love of God, and expoſed to the dreadful conſequences of his diſpleaſure. That they have not only acceſs to ſalvation through Chriſt, but that in this work he hath no rival; it is his, excluſive of all others: ſo that no man, whatever be his character, or whatever be his hope, ſhall enter into reſt, unleſs he be reconciled to God through Jeſus Chriſt.

Now, that all mankind are by nature in a ſtate of guilt and condemnation, is evident from the whole ſtrain of the holy Scriptures. This originally conſtituted the neceſſity of a Saviour, and alone illuſtrates the love and mercy of God in the appearance of his Son in our nature. Unleſs this is ſuppoſed, the whole diſpenſations of the grace of God, both in the Old teſtament and in the New, loſe their beauty, and loſe their meaning; nay, and would be juſtly eſteemed fooliſhneſs, as they are in fact by all who ſee not this foundation upon which they are built. As our firſt parents, and the earth for their ſakes, were laid under a curſe immediately after the original tranſgreſſion; ſo the effects of this apoſtacy on their poſterity are amply declared in Scripture. We have this repeated teſtimony from God himſelf concerning the old world, "And God "ſaw that the wickedneſs of man was great in the earth, "and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart "was only evil continually."* And again, "And the "Lord ſaid in his heart, I will not again curſe the ground "any more for man's ſake; for the imagination of man's "heart is evil from his youth."†

* Gen. vi. 5. † Gen. viii. 21.

The rites and ceremonies of the Moſaic diſpenſation alſo, together with the whole hiſtory of providence contained in the Old Teſtament, ſuppoſe the guilt and impurity of our nature. But the goſpel, as it is in all reſpects a clearer diſpenſation than the former, ſo it is moſt full and expreſs upon this ſubject. Inſtead of enumerating many paſſages, we may conſult the epiſtle of the apoſtle Paul to the Romans, where there is a diſtinct and labored illuſtration of the guilt and apoſtacy of all mankind; towards the concluſion of which he thus expreſſes himſelf: "For "we before proved both Jews and Gentiles that they are "all under ſin; as it is written, There is none righteous, "no not one: there is none that underſtandeth, there is "none that ſeeketh after God. They are all gone out of "the way, they are together become unprofitable; there "is none that doth good, no not one."*—And a little after, "That every mouth may be ſtopped, and all the world "become guilty before God."† To this I ſhall only add one paſſage from the ſame apoſtle: "Among whom alſo "we had our converſation in times paſt, in the luſts of "our fleſh, fulfilling the deſires of the fleſh, and of the "mind; and were by nature children of wrath, even as "others."‡

That the ſame Scriptures point out to us one only remedy for this our miſery, is equally evident. Chriſt Jeſus was promiſed to our firſt parents under the deſignation of the ſeed of the woman, who ſhould bruiſe the head of the ſerpent. He is afterwards promiſed to Abraham as his ſeed, in whom all the nations of the earth ſhould be bleſſed; to Jacob as Shiloh, to whom the gathering of the people ſhould be. He is pointed out by Moſes as the great prophet that ſhould come into the world. And unleſs we ſuppoſe a typical reference to Chriſt in the legal waſhings, ſacrifices, and other ſervices, they will appear altogether unworthy of God, and altogether inſufficient for the purpoſes for which they were uſed. This indeed is affirmed by the apoſtle to the Hebrews, "For it is not poſſible that the

* Rom. iii. 9—12. † Rom. iii. 19. ‡ Eph. ii. 2.

" blood of bulls and of goats ſhall take away ſins."* In the later prophets, there are many diſtinct and particular, many high and magnificent deſcriptions of the glory of Chriſt's perſon, and the greatneſs of his work. The attention and expectation of every believer is directed to him; and he is ſtyled " the deſire of all nations."†

And in the New Teſtament, at his conception it is ſaid, " Thou ſhalt call his name Jeſus, for he ſhall ſave his " people from their ſins."‡ At his entrance on his public miniſtry, he is thus deſignated by John the Baptiſt, " Be- " hold the Lamb of God that taketh away the ſin of the " world."‖ The great deſign of his appearing in our nature, is declared in many paſſages of ſcripture. And as ſalvation is promiſed to thoſe who believe, ſo the condemnation of all unbelievers is neceſſarily implied as its counter-part, and often expreſsly affirmed. Thus the apoſtle John repreſents our Saviour himſelf as teaching, " God ſo " loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, " that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not PERISH, " but have everlaſting life."* And when he gave commiſſion to his diſciples to preach the goſpel, it was in theſe terms: " Go ye into all the world, and preach the goſpel " to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, " ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not, ſhall be damn- " ed."† The very meaning of the word Goſpel is glad tidings; importing not only the great, but the diſtinguiſhing happineſs of thoſe who hear the meſſage, and comply with the call. The apoſtles, who ſpread theſe glad tidings through the world, conſidered themſelves as bringing ſalvation to thoſe who before ſat in darkneſs, and in the region of the ſhadow of death. And by the following deſcription given by the apoſtle Paul of the ſtate of the Epheſians before converſion, may be ſeen what view he had of the condition of all who knew not God, as well as who believed not the goſpel, " That at that time ye were with- " out Chriſt, being aliens from the common-wealth of

* Heb. x. 4. † Hag. ii. 6. ‡ Matt. i. 21. ‖ John i. 29.

* John iii. 16. † Mark xvi. 15, 16.

"Iſrael, and ſtrangers from the covenants of promiſe, "having no hope, and without God in the world."*— From the above ſummary, I hope it clearly appears, that, according to the Scriptures, there is no ſalvation in any other than in Jeſus Chriſt of Nazareth.

It will, however, be proper, for the further illuſtration of this ſubject, to conſider a little to what this doctrine ſtands oppoſed. And though it is impoſſible diſtinctly to enumerate every thing that may in ſome ſhape or other be put in Chriſt's room, or attempt to rob him of his glory as a Saviour; yet, in general, they may all be reduced to the two following heads: 1ſt, Falſe religions, and uninſtituted rites; 2dly, Self-righteouſneſs, or the merit of our own defective obedience to the moral law. It is neceſſary to conſider each of theſe by itſelf, and to ſtate the bounds between them: for however little relation they may ſeem to have one to another, they are often mingled together in our apprehenſions, and mutually ſupport and ſtrengthen each other's cauſe.

In the firſt place, then, All worſhip of falſe gods, holding for truth what hath not the ſtamp of divine authority; and all uncommanded worſhip, be the object of it what it will, is wholly ineffectual to ſalvation: nay, ſo far is any thing of this kind from being ſufficient to ſupplant, or proper to co-operate with what Chriſt hath done, that it is deteſtable in the ſight of God. Perhaps it may be thought, that this is of ſmall moment, and wholly unworthy of notice; as in theſe days few or none will ſo much as pretend, except in jeſt, to lay any ſtreſs upon fabulous deities, or ſuperſtitious practices of human invention. But I did not chuſe to omit it, becauſe it appears to me a thing peculiarly inſiſted on in the holy Scriptures, which contain nothing unneceſſary. It is alſo very much the object of the reſentment of infidels.† At the ſame time, many pre-

* Eph ii. 12.

† It is very remarkable, that though infidels always ſet out on pretence of ſearching impartially after truth; yet they have unanimouſly agreed in putting truth and error entirely upon the ſame footing, both as to worth and influence.

tended Chriſtians have, by deſign or inadvertance, ſpoke too much the language of infidels on this ſubject, or on ſubjects nearly related to it.

How much ſtreſs the Scriptures lay upon the knowledge of the true God, nay, how pernicious and deſtructive all falſe religions are, it were eaſy to ſhew at great length; but a few hints will ſuffice, as it is not a point controverted ſo much as neglected and forgotten. The very firſt commandment of the moral law is, "Thou "ſhalt have no other Gods before me."* And the ſecond, which forbids uninſtituted worſhip, hath this ſtrong ſanction, "For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, "viſiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children un- "to the third and fourth generation of them that hate me."† Through the whole Old Teſtament, the idolatry and falſe worſhip of the Heathens is repreſented as highly criminal in them, and an abomination in the ſight of God. It is there conſidered, not as a ſmall part, but as the firſt and moſt provoking of their enormities; and in particular, is aſſigned as the ground of the utter extirpation of the nations of Canaan. In a perfect conſiſtency with which, in the charge brought againſt them by the apoſtle Paul, this is the leading part or ground-work of the whole, "Becauſe that when they knew God, they glorified him "not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain "in their imaginations, and their fooliſh heart was dar- "kened.‡—And changed the glory of the incorruptible "God, into an image made like a corruptible man, and "to birds, and four-footed beaſts, and creeping things."‖

The great end alſo of the ſeparation of the children of Iſrael, and their being kept from intercourſe with other nations, was, that they might be preſerved from idolatry. To the worſhip of the true God their bleſſings are promiſed, and againſt defection from his ſervice to other gods the heavieſt curſes are denounced. Thus, after an enumeration of the bleſſings that ſhould attend them if they kept God's commandments, it is ſaid, "And thou ſhalt

* Exod xx. 3. † Exod. xx. 5. ‡ Rom. i. 21. ‖ Ibid. ver. 23.

" not go aſide from any of the words that I command thee " this day, to the right-hand or to the left, to go after " other gods to ſerve them."* And when they ſtood before the Lord, to enter into his covenant, it is ſaid, " For ye know how we have dwelt in the land of " Egypt, and how we came through the nations which " ye paſſed by. And ye have ſeen their abominations, " and their idols, wood and ſtone, ſilver and gold, which " were among them. Leſt there ſhould be among you, " man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whoſe heart turn- " eth away this day from the Lord our God, to go and " ſerve the gods of theſe nations; leſt there ſhould be " among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood."† The ſame thing may be ſeen running through the whole of the prophetic writings. Almoſt every judgment of God threatened or inflicted, is aſcribed to their idolatry as its cauſe. I only mention one paſſage, not for any thing particular in it, but as a ſufficient ſpecimen of the whole. It is a meſſage from God by Ezekiel to the children of Iſrael: " Therefore ſay unto the houſe of Iſrael, " Thus ſaith the Lord God, Repent and turn yourſelves " from your idols, and turn away your faces from all your " abominations. For every one of the houſe of Iſrael, " or of the ſtranger that ſojourneth in Iſrael, which ſe- " parateth himſelf from me, and ſetteth up his idols in " his heart, and putteth the ſtumbling-block of his ini- " quity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to en- " quire of him concerning me; I the Lord will anſwer " him by myſelf, and I will ſet my face againſt that man, " and will make him a ſign and a proverb, and I will " cut him off from the midſt of my people, and ye ſhall " know that I am the Lord."‡

In the very ſame manner, in the New Teſtament, embracing the goſpel of Chriſt, and continuing ſtedfaſt in the faith, is required as abſolutely neceſſary to ſalvation; " He that believeth on the Son, hath everlaſting life; and " he that believeth not the Son, ſhall not ſee life, but

* Deut. xxviii. 14. † Deut. xxix. 16, 17, 18. ‡ Ezek. xiv, 6, 7, 8.

"the wrath of God abideth on him."* The importance of holding the truth without mixture, is plainly declared in the following paſſage: "Brethren, if any of "you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let "him know, that he which converteth the ſinner from "the error of his way, ſhall ſave a ſoul from death, and "ſhall hide a multitude of ſins."†

It had been eaſy to have given a much larger proof of this from Scripture; but it is unneceſſary; for our enemies themſelves confeſs it, nay object it as a ground of reproach. How many invectives have we from infidel writers againſt the unpeaceable, unſocial ſpirit of the Jewiſh firſt, and afterwards of the Chriſtian religion? And how often are theſe contraſted with the mild and aſſociating temper of the Heathen worſhippers? Among them it implied no abſurdity, that different nations ſhould have different gods, and different forms of worſhip; nay, they often intermixed, compounded, and mutually adopted each others worſhip. The Athenians, that wiſe people, were ſo prone to receive every foreign rite, that they got this character from an ancient writer (whether by way of encomium indeed, or ſatire, is at this diſtance uncertain) that they were hoſpitable to the gods. According to the ſentiments of modern unbelievers, they would deſerve much praiſe for this; but, according to the ſentiments of an inſpired apoſtle, "profeſſing themſelves wiſe, they be-"came fools."

In this then it is acknowledged, that the goſpel of our ſalvation eſſentially differs from every human invention; that it conſtantly repreſents itſelf as THE TRUTH, and all things oppoſite to it, as falſe, diſhonorable to God, and unprofitable to men. This has been the caſe in every ſtep of its progreſs, from its firſt riſe in the comparative obſcurity of the original promiſe, through all the preparatory diſcoveries of ſucceeding ages, to its complete manifeſtation in the fulneſs of time. And though it has been expoſed on this account to the virulent reproaches of men of corrupt minds, it is but ſo much the more credible,

* John iii. 36. † James v. 19, 20.

and appears to be from the one only, the living, unchangeable, and true God.*

It may be proper here to obſerve, that it is either the ſame objection aſſuming a different form, or one very much like it, when it is alledged againſt the goſpel, That it lays too much ſtreſs upon mere belief of the truth. To this ſome have, perhaps by miſtaking the true ſpring of the objection, given a very wrong and dangerous anſwer. They deny the fact, that the goſpel does lay too much, or any ſtreſs at all upon bare belief ſeparate from goodneſs of life. The danger of this anſwer does not lie in its being falſe, but in its being ambiguous, incomplete, and in a great meaſure improper. It ſeems to allow, at leaſt not to deny, that there may be ſincere belief, while yet it is not attended with its proper fruits. This unbelievers, whoſe real quarrel is with the alledged importance and efficacy of the truth, are hardened in their indifference and diſregard to it; whereas they ought to be taught to conſider the principles which are productive of real reformation, as more excellent in themſelves, as both neceſſary and effectual for this purpoſe.

The goſpel does indeed lay great ſtreſs upon belief of the truth, not without, but as the only way of producing holineſs. Many paſſages may be cited from the Old Teſtament, in which going after falſe gods, and committing other groſs crimes, are repreſented as inſeparable branches of the ſame character; and worſhipping and ſerving the true God, as a ſummary deſcription of univerſal obedience.† And many paſſages may be produced from the New Teſtament, in which the good effects of the truth, and the miſery of departing from it, as neceſſarily implying an unſanctified ſtate, are declared.‡ From all this I conclude, that Chriſt Jeſus, the promiſe of old made unto the fathers, the hope of Iſrael, the light of the world,

* See this ſubject handled with great clearneſs and preciſion by Dr. Warburton in his Divine Legation of Moſes.

† See Deut. xxix. 18, 19. Numb. xxv. 1, 2. ‡ See John viii. 31, 32. Id. xvii. 17. 2 John ver. 4. Col. i. 5, 6.

and the end of the law for righteouſneſs to every one that believeth, is the only Saviour of ſinners, in oppoſition to all falſe religions, and every uninſtituted rite; as he himſelf ſays, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no "man cometh unto the Father but by me."*

But, 2dly, Chriſt is the only Saviour, in oppoſition to the merit of our own obedience to the moral law. I know, ſome will be ready to ſuppoſe, that though falſe religion and uninſtituted rites may have no poſitive influence in procuring ſalvation to thoſe who embrace them, yet they may not hinder their acceptance with God by virtue of their own perſonal merit and obedience. On this ſubject there are many things which deſerve a more particular and diſtinct conſideration than there is room for at preſent; ſuch as, 1, That all falſe religion is not merely unprofitable, but highly criminal in the ſight of God. Thus the apoſtle Paul, "But I ſay, that the things which the Gen- "tiles ſacrifice, they ſacrifice to devils, and not to God: "and I would not that ye ſhould have fellowſhip with "devils."† 2. That all who embrace not the truth as it is in Jeſus, muſt neglect the whole duties of the firſt table of the moral law, and ſo their obedience be not only greatly, but eſſentially defective. 3. That the Scriptures give us no ground to believe, that falſe principles can produce any virtue but what is ſpurious. But inſtead of inſiſting upon theſe at preſent, I ſhall only attempt to ſhew, that the Scriptures exclude all human merit, and indeed ſeem to have it as their expreſs purpoſe, to ſtain the pride of all human glory; and therefore that no pretence of this kind can poſſibly be admitted.

And here I ſhall wholly paſs the ſacrifices of atonement under the Moſaic diſpenſation, becauſe they all pointed at the ſacrifice offered by Chriſt upon the croſs; and therefore, in the account given of the end and deſtination of this laſt, we may expect the cleareſt view of the grounds of our acceptance with God. Now, Chriſt appears in Scripture, "as the Lamb of God, which taketh "away the ſin of the world;" as "giving his life" for his

* John xiv. 6. † 1 Cor. x. 20.

people; as "bearing their ſins in his own body on the "tree." And indeed every expreſſion is uſed that could well be imagined to ſignify a propitiatory ſacrifice, an atonement for ſin, or the puniſhment of an innocent perſon in the room and ſtead of the guilty. If this was neceſſary for any, it was neceſſary for all; and as there is not the leaſt intimation given in Scripture of any diſtinction, or hint, as if there were any perſons with regard to whom it was ſuperfluous. Nothing, therefore, can ſtand more directly oppoſed to the deſign of the goſpel, than any plea of merit in man: and none do in fact receive it with more diſdain, than thoſe who truſt in themſelves that they are righteous.

But, for our ſatisfaction on this point, we need only conſult the epiſtle to the Romans, before referred to, as there is no part of the ſacred writing where there is a more full and connected account of the foundation of the goſpel. There, after proving that all the world are become guilty before God, the apoſtle ſays, "Therefore by the deeds of "the law, there ſhall no fleſh be juſtified in his ſight: for "by the law is the knowledge of ſin.* Being juſtified "freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in "Jeſus Chriſt: whom God hath ſet forth to be a propitia-"tion, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteouſ-"neſs for the remiſſion of ſins that are paſt, through the "forbearance of God,"† And again, "Therefore as by "the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to con-"demnation; even ſo by the righteouſneſs of one, the free "gift came upon all men to juſtification of life."‡ Conſonant to this is the doctrine of the ſame apoſtle elſewhere: "Yea doubtleſs, and I count all things but loſs, for the "excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord: "for whom I have ſuffered the loſs of all things, and do "count them but dung that I may win Chriſt, and be "found in him, not having mine own righteouſneſs, which "is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Chriſt, "the righteouſneſs which is of God by faith."‖

* Rom. iii. 20. † Ib. ver. 24, 25. ‡ Chap. v. 18.

‖ Phil. iii. 8, 9. See alſo Rom. iv. 23—25. Tit. iii. 5.

I am not insensible, that great pains have been taken, even by some Christians, to evade the force of these passages of Scripture, which exclude the merit of man's obedience from any share in his justification before God. Particularly, the passages from the epistle to the Romans are evaded, by alledging, that the law, and the works of the law, there, mean only the rites of the Mosaic dispensation. This is not a proper time and place for entering fully into that controversy; and therefore I shall only observe, that, besides the correspondence of the above interpretation with all the other parts of Scripture, it may be sufficiently supported by this one consideration, That the apostle, who is speaking both of Jews and Gentiles, expressly states the opposition with respect to our justification between grace and debt, and excludes every thing that might make it of debt: "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By "what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. "Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith, "without the deeds of the law."* And to the same purpose, a little after, "Now to him that worketh is the re-"ward not of grace, but of debt. But to him that work-"eth not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, "his faith is counted for righteousness."† Whatever would make our acceptance with God not free, or not of grace, is here excluded. Now, certainly, as there is a much more plausible plea of merit in favor of works of obedience to the moral, than the ceremonial law; the first are at least as much excluded as the last by the apostle's reasoning.‡

* Rom. iii. 27, 28. ‡ Rom. iv. 4, 5.

† It is easy to foresee, that a grand objection against what is said on this head will be, That it is going upon a very narrow scheme, and a scheme very uncharitable to many parties of Christians. It is the fashionable language of the age, to give large encomiums upon charity, when the design is to level truth and falsehood; and to alledge, either that there is little difference between them, as to their effects, or that they cannot be distinguished from one another by their proper marks. This is a subject that needs as much to be set in a proper light, as any I know. If the sense in which charity in sentiment is commonly understood, viz. a favorable judgment of the opinions of

Thus I have endeavored both to explain and confirm the aſſertion in the text, That there is no ſalvation in any other but in Chriſt. There is, however, one queſtion upon it which I would willingly paſs over in ſilence, but that the omiſſion of it might, to ſome intelligent hearers, weaken the concluſion, and make them reckon the ſubject

others, be the Scripture meaning of it, then certainly ſome bounds muſt be ſet to it; and it muſt be praiſe or blame worthy, according to the caſes in which it is exerciſed. I muſt needs take it for granted, that there are ſome fundamental errors, and that it is poſſible to make ſhipwreck of the faith. Now, however common or faſhionable it may be, to think, the farther charity is extended the better: it may be demonſtrated, that a favorable judgment of errors fundamental, or deſtructive of religion, doth neceſſarily imply either a light eſteem or weak perſuaſion of the truth, or both. This ſurely is no part of a truly Chriſtian character; and if it be rightly denominated charity, it is become vicious by exceſs. I confeſs it appears to me, that juſtification by free grace is a fundamental doctrine of the goſpel. If this be true, I am not wrong in having the deepeſt ſenſe of the danger of contrary opinions: nay, if I am miſtaken, the conſequences I draw from it, are no breaches of charity, but the neceſſary effects of an error in judgment; and ſo I claim charity in my turn from my adverſaries upon their own principles.

But I am perſuaded the above is not the meaning of the word Charity in Scripture, but that it means an ardent and unfeigned love to others, and a deſire of their welfare, temporal and eternal; and may very well conſiſt with the ſtrongeſt abhorrence of their wicked principles. We do find indeed in Scripture many charges, not to judge one another, mutually to forbear one another in things indifferent, and not to ſuppoſe that men's outward actions proceed from a bad principle which they do not profeſs. But this is never called charity; and it is, by the reaſoning on it, expreſsly limited to things really indifferent in their nature. (See the xivth and xvth chapters of the epiſtle to the Romans.) Perhaps it will be ſaid, ſome may judge things to be neceſſary, which in truth are but indifferent. This cannot be denied; but there is no help for it. It is a conſequence of the imperfection of human nature. Yet ſtill every man muſt judge for himſelf, and muſt diſtinguiſh between things indifferent and neceſſary, in the beſt manner he can. It is very remarkable, that the apoſtle John, who ſpeaks moſt of the importance of charity and mutual love, hath alſo perhaps the ſtrongeſt expreſſions of any of the apoſtles, on the hatefulneſs and danger of error. Thus he ſays in his ſecond epiſtle, ver. 10, 11. "If "there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him "not into your houſe, neither bid him God ſpeed. For he that bid-"deth him God ſpeed, is partaker of his evil deeds."

incompletely handled. The queſtion is, Whether an objective revelation and explicit diſcovery of Chriſt, and what he hath wrought, is neceſſary to ſalvation? or if his undertaking may not be the ground of acceptance for many who never heard of his name? In ſupport of the laſt of theſe it is ſaid, That many of the ancient patriarchs and prophets were far from having diſtinct views of the perſon, character, and work of Chriſt; and if (as all ſuppoſe) his undertaking was available for their acceptance, why not of others alſo? On ſuch a queſtion, no doubt, modeſty and caution is highly commendable, and perhaps it were wiſe in ſome reſpects to ſuſpend the determination altogether. But there are caſes in which it comes neceſſarily to be conſidered: for inſtance, I do not ſee how it can be avoided, in ſpeaking of the importance or neceſſity of propagating the goſpel among the nations that know not God.

We may therefore obſerve, that the only juſt foundation of our hope in God, either for ourſelves or others, eſpecially as ſinners, is his promiſe. The firſt of theſe ought to be preciſely commenſurate to the laſt. In ſo far as it is defective, or falls ſhort of this meaſure, we are chargeable with unbelief; and in ſo far as it exceeds, with preſumption. Now, to whomſoever the true God is revealed in any meaſure, as merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, tranſgreſſion and ſin; however obſcurely he points out the meritorious cauſe of pardon, if they believe his word and accept of his mercy, they ſhall be ſaved; as we are told, "Abraham believed God, and it was "counted to him for righteouſneſs."* As to any others, if they are in abſolute ignorance of the true God, we muſt ſay, that there doth not appear, from Scripture, any ground on which to affirm, that the efficacy of Chriſt's death extends to them: on the contrary, we are expreſsly told, that they have "no hope."† We find indeed in ſcripture, that the diſplay of divine perfection in the works of creation, and the conduct of Providence, is repreſented as rendering the heathens inexcuſeable in their contempt and

* Rom. iv. 3. † See the forecited paſſage, Eph. ii. 12.

neglect of God: "Nevertheleſs he left not himſelf with-
"out witneſs, in that he did good, and gave us rain from
"heaven, and fruitful ſeaſons, filling our hearts with food
"and gladneſs.* Becauſe that which may be known of
"God is manifeſt in them; for God hath ſhewed it unto
"them. For the inviſible things of him from the creation
"of the world are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the
"things that are made, even his eternal power and god-
"head; ſo that they are without excuſe."† Should any deſire from theſe paſſages to infer, that if any of them made a juſt and dutiful uſe of theſe natural notices of God, he would not fruſtrate their ſearch, but would lead them to the ſaving knowledge of himſelf, I have nothing to object againſt the general poſition; but I am afraid it will be difficult to make any other legitimate uſe of this conceſſion than the apoſtle has made already, that they are "without excuſe" in their eſtrangement from God. One thing more we are authoriſed from ſcripture to ſay, that their guilt is in proportion to their means of knowledge; that they continue in their natural ſtate, and are not chargeable with the ſin of rejecting the goſpel which they never heard: "For as many as have ſinned without law,
"ſhall alſo periſh without law; and as many as have ſin-
"ned in the law, ſhall be judged by the law."‡

I proceed now to the ſecond thing propoſed, which was, To make a few reflections on this ſcheme; and ſhew, that it is not only moſt ſelf-conſiſtent, but moſt agreeable to the other parts of ſcripture, as well as to the viſible ſtate of the world; and therefore that thoſe who, in reaſoning with infidels, depart from it in any meaſure, do thereby betray the cauſe which they profeſs to ſupport.

We have many proofs of the ingenuity and art of perſons under the power of prejudice, in evading the force, or wreſting the meaning of particular texts of ſcripture; and therefore it muſt ſerve much for the confirmation of any doctrine, that it is not only ſupported by expreſs paſſages, but agreeable to the ſtrain and ſpirit of the whole. That this is the caſe with the doctrine in queſtion, I might

* Acts xiv. 17. † Rom. i. 19, 20. ‡ Rom. ii. 12.

ſhew at great length: at preſent I content myſelf with the few following reflections. 1ſt, There is nothing more frequently or more undeniably found in ſcripture, than a celebration of the rich mercy and free grace of God in Chriſt Jeſus, in ſuch language as will ſcarce accord with any other plan than that which I have above endeavored to explain and ſupport. It has been a remark frequently made, of the juſtice of which every ſerious peruſer of the ſacred writings will be ſenſible, that the inſpired penmen ſeem, as it were, to be raiſed and elevated above their ordinary pitch when they are on this theme, and that both in the Old and New Teſtament. Wherever there is a ſtriking paſſage in the poetic, or prophetic writings, containing ſentiments of the moſt rapturous joy, or moſt ardent gratitude, there we may be ſure is a prophecy of Chriſt. See the Pſalmiſt David often thus diſtinguiſhing himſelf, particularly in the following paſſage: "His name ſhall endure forever: his name ſhall be continued as long as "the ſun: and men ſhall be bleſſed in him; and all nations ſhall call him bleſſed. Bleſſed be the Lord God, "the God of Iſrael, who only doth wondrous things. And "bleſſed be his glorious name forever; and let the whole "earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen."* The apoſtle Paul alſo, not only when expreſsly handling the ſubject, but even when he accidentally meets with it in the illuſtration of another argument, ſeems to fire at the thought, and either expatiates upon it with a profuſion of eloquence, and energy of expreſſion; or collects as it were, his whole force, and ſurpriſes us more, by diſpatching it at one ſingle maſterly ſtroke.†

Now, I would aſk, Why ſo many encomiums on the mercy and grace of God in pardoning ſinners through Chriſt, if his undertaking had not been abſolutely neceſſary for their recovery? Whence could ariſe ſo deep an obligation to gratitude, if our ſtate had not been abſolutely deplorable, or if relief could have been obtained from any other quarter? There muſt ſurely be a great impropriety

* Pſal. lxxii. 17, 18, 19. † See an inſtance of the firſt of theſe, Eph. iii. 17. and of the laſt, 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

in the Scripture-language on this ſubject, when uſed by ſome perſons agreeably to their other ſentiments. And indeed their being very ſparing of this language, avoiding it as much as poſſible, and dwelling with moſt pleaſure on different themes, is a tacit confeſſion and acknowledgment of this truth.

But, beſides the mercy of God to the world in general in ſending his Son to redeem us who were ſold under ſin, we find in ſcripture many ſtrong declarations of the infinite mercy of God in ſending the tidings of ſalvation to thoſe who were ignorant of them before. This appears from ſeveral of the paſſages formerly cited, and many more that might be added. I only mention one of the apoſtle Paul, recorded in the Acts of the Apoſtles: "Be "it known therefore unto you, that the ſalvation of God "is ſent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it."* Now, what is meant by this? Were theſe Gentiles in a way of ſalvation before? and what benefit did they reap from this intelligence? If it be ſaid, that they were comparatively in a more advantageous ſituation than before; this when ſtrictly examined, will be found to draw after it all the conſequences ſo diſagreeable to the pride of man, for which the other ſuppoſition is rejected. Or rather, when their comparative advantages are carried ſo far as to give any thing like a conſiſtent meaning to the above and other paſſages of Scripture, it will amount entirely to the ſame thing. For I hope no Chriſtian will aſſert, that any perſon in the world, who hath the exerciſe of reaſon, is under a Natural, but only a Moral impoſſibility,† of com-

* Acts xxviii. 28.

† I uſe the words Natural and Moral impoſſibility in the ſenſe in which they are uſed by the authors who firſt applied that diſtinction to ſubjects of philoſophy and divinity, and not in the abſurd ſenſe in which ſome late infidel writers do obſtinately perſiſt in uſing them. Theſe gentlemen, inſtead of meaning by Natural or Phyſical neceſſity or impoſſibility, that which ariſes from the irreſiſtible operation of the laws of nature, and by Moral, a high degree of probability from concurring circumſtances, tell us, that Phyſical neceſſity is what ariſes from the laws of matter; and Moral, that which ariſes from the laws of mind or ſpirit. But nothing can be more evident, than that any influence from without upon mind or ſpirit, if it be irreſiſtible, is as

ing to the knowledge, and doing the will of God. If the firſt were the caſe, it would take away all ſin; but the laſt is only ſuch an obſtinate diſinclination, as is ſtill conſiſtent with guilt and blame.

Another reflection we may make on this ſubject, That according to the conſtant tenor of the holy Scripture, not only an offer of mercy for Chriſt's ſake muſt be made to the ſinner, but a change muſt be wrought on his heart and temper ſo great, as to be termed a New Creation, and a Second Birth. The firſt of theſe is an act of the divine government, the laſt is a work of divine power, Now, I would beg leave to aſk, How and where is this to be expected? It cannot ſurely proceed from the influence of fabulous deities, or be the effect of idolatrous rites. It is not the work of man, and therefore only of the Spirit of Chriſt. Should any think fit to preſume, that the ſanctifying influences of the holy Ghoſt are beſtowed univerſally, though unknown to the receivers; this again annihilates all the ſuperior advantages of Chriſtians; and, on the very beſt poſſible ſuppoſition, is an aſſertion thrown out at random, and altogether deſtitute of ſupport from the oracles of truth.

A third obſervation I would make, That this ſcheme alone makes the foundation of the goſpel ſufficient to bear the ſuperſtructure. Nothing elſe can ſufficiently account for the coſt and expence, if I may ſpeak ſo, that have been laid out in the redemption of man. It is very evident, that both the prophets in the Old Teſtament, and the apoſtles in the New, are at great pains to give us a view of the glory and dignity of the PERSON of CHRIST. With what magnificent titles is he adorned? What glorious attributes are aſcribed to him? And what mighty works are ſaid to be done by him? All theſe conſpire to teach us, that he is truly and properly God, God over all, bleſſed for ever. On the other hand, How much is his humiliation and abaſement inſiſted on; the reproach and contempt of his life, the pain and ignominy of his death? And the infinite value of his ſufferings, ariſing from theſe two united conſi-

much phyſical or natural neceſſity as any other. And the diſtinction thus explained, or perverted, is utterly uſeleſs, when applied to morals.

derations? Nothing can more plainly ſhew the guilt and miſery of man, than that ſo great a perſon ſhould be employed in reſcuing him, ſo infinite a price paid for his ranſom. If ſuch a propitiation was neceſſary for the heirs of glory, how hopeleſs muſt be the ſtate of thoſe who have no claim to, or intereſt in, or dependence upon it?*

The laſt obſervation I am to make at preſent, is, That the ſcheme above laid down, is alſo moſt agreeable to the viſible ſtate of the world, and furniſhes the plain and the only ſufficient anſwer to the old objection againſt the Chriſtian revelation, the want of univerſality. This aſſertion to ſome will appear ſurpriſing, as it ſeems to have been on purpoſe to avoid or anſwer this objection, that all the other opinions have been formed. However, they ſtill leave the objection in all its force; nay, it is often ſupported and ſtrengthened by the reaſonings upon them. But, on the principles above laid down, it is capable of the following plain and eaſy ſolution. It is of the infinite mercy and free grace of God, that he did not leave all mankind to periſh in a ſtate of ſin and miſery. Where then lies the difficulty in believing, that ſome only, and not all, are ſaved, or are furniſhed with the means of ſalvation? If all are juſtly liable to wrath, upon which the whole goſpel is built, mercy to a part can never be improbable, or unworthy of God, on account of the ruin in the reſt: ſo that the objection can only take its riſe from doubt or diſbelief of that firſt and fundamental truth.

If a prince had a number of traitors in his power, whoſe treaſon was of the moſt aggravated and inexcuſeable kind, and we ſhould be inform that he had granted a free pardon to ſome, and left the reſt to ſuffer the juſt puniſhment of their crime; would it be the leaſt objection againſt his clemency, that it extended only to a ſelect number of the offenders? or would it be any juſt impeachment of his

* It is a ſtrong confirmation of this, that it holds almoſt without exception, in comparing the ſentiments and ſchemes of the different parties of Chriſtians, that thoſe who have the ſlighteſt ſenſe of the neceſſity of atonement, and the greateſt bias to a ſelf-righteous plan, are always moſt diſpoſed to leſſen the glory of our Redeemer's perſon; lean moſt to, or judge moſt favorably of the Socinian or Arian hypotheſis.

management, or render the intelligence incredible, ſuppoſing the prince to be wiſe, as well as gracious? The caſe is preciſely the ſame with God. If it be but granted, that it is Mercy extended to thoſe who eſcape, this abſolutely deſtroys the force of any objection that can be drawn from the number or circumſtances of thoſe that periſh.

There is in this reſpect a beautiful and inſtructive analogy between the courſe of divine Providence, and the methods of divine grace; and much in both muſt be reſolved into the wiſdom and ſovereignty of God. There is an immenſe variety in the diſtribution both of natural advantages and ſpiritual bleſſings; and it is vain for us to expect that we ſhould be able to aſſign the whole, or indeed almoſt any, of the grounds either of the one or the other. But if neither ſort is merited, if both are the effects of free undeſerved bounty, this cuts off all cauſe of complaint; and as to the difference which we obſerve in fact, particularly with regard to the laſt, we muſt be content to ſay, with the apoſtle Paul, "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God! how unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out!"*

From theſe obſervations it will plainly appear, that departing from the principles above laid down, is a very great injury to the cauſe of truth, and ſtrengthens that of infidelity. If they are founded upon the word of God, as I hope has been ſufficiently proved, then no good can poſſibly flow from ſoftening or diſguiſing them, in order to leſſen their oppoſition to the pride and prejudices of corrupt minds. Has ſuch conduct in fact leſſened the number of infidels, or reconciled them to the doctrine of Chriſt? On the contrary, have they not become more numerous, and more bold in their oppoſition to the goſpel, in proportion to the attempts that have been and are made to ſuit it to their taſte? Nay, have they not made uſe of innumerable paſſages from Chriſtian writers in ſupport of their own cauſe? For in all ſuch caſes, as Chriſtians ſpeak

* Rom. xi. 32, 33.

merely the language of natural religion, or magnify the preſent powers of the human mind, in order to rear up a ſelf-righteous ſcheme, they are conſidered by infidels, and juſtly, not as defending the goſpel with ſucceſs, but as yielding up the great point in debate, and coming over to their own party.

I proceed now to make ſome practical improvement of this ſubject. And, in the

1ſt place, From what hath been ſaid, you may ſee the real, the unſpeakable moment of propagating Chriſtian knowledge. It is indeed, ſo far as it is cordially embraced, turning men "from darkneſs to light, "and from the power of Satan unto God." Theſe words have a deep and intereſting meaning, if underſtood as above, but not otherwiſe. Let us only ſuppoſe thoſe who deny or call in queſtion the abſolute neceſſity of ſalvation through Chriſt, employed as miſſionaries in converting the Heathens: how cold, how ambiguous and inconcluſive the arguments with which they would endeavor to preſs the change! But the view of it given above, muſt in the ſtrongeſt manner diſpoſe every ſerious perſon to ſupport ſuch a deſign, and powerfully animate to diligence thoſe who are employed in carrying it into execution.

It is allowed by all, that doing good, and communicating happineſs, is the moſt excellent character; that promoting the intereſt of our brethren of mankind, is a natural fruit and expreſſion of our love to God, and an imitation of the divine benignity. But what compariſon is there between any acts of beneficence that regard only the preſent life and the welfare of the body, and thoſe that affect the everlaſting intereſt of an immortal ſpirit? As far as God's redeeming grace is ſuperior to his providential care, ſo far muſt our ſincere and ſucceſsful endeavors to promote the ſalvation of the ſoul, excel any relief or help we can give to the wants of the body.

The laſt of theſe purpoſes, however, is often celebrated by infidels, in oppoſition to the other, which they delight in treating with deriſion and ſcorn. But as nothing can be more evident than its comparative excellence, ſuppo-

fing its reality ; ſo there is not the leaſt contrariety between the two deſigns : ſo far from it, that they are ſtrongly connected together, and are always beſt promoted in conjunction. There may be indeed ſingle inſtances of perſons, from oſtentation or other falſe motives, parting with their goods to feed the poor, who have no true love to God or their brethren. But in general, it is certain, that thoſe who have " their treaſure in heaven ; who love " not the world, nor the things of the world ;" which, however hard a ſaying it may appear, is the real character of every Chriſtian, will more eaſily communicate of what they poſſeſs to thoſe who ſtand in need. True religion always enlarges the heart, and ſtrengthens the ſocial tie. Every believer muſt view his poor brethren in ſeveral endearing lights, as children of the ſame heavenly Father, as under the ſame original guilt, dependent on the ſame Saviour, and preparing for the ſame judgment ; whereas wicked men, however various their characters, do habitually, by luxury and ſelf-indulgence of ſome kind or other, feed their pride, increaſe their wants, and inflame their appetites. This not only gives them a narrow turn of mind, but often waſtes their ſubſtance ; and ſo neceſſarily obſtructs their liberality, by taking away both the inclination and ability to beſtow.

And as thoſe who have a juſt concern for the everlaſting intereſt of others, will be moſt diſpoſed to relieve their preſent diſtreſſes ; ſo the bounty of ſuch will always be beſt directed, and followed with the happieſt effects. They never ſeparate the two great ends, of making men happy in this world, and heirs of eternal life ; and will therefore have it as their chief care, to promote induſtry and ſobriety in all whom they take upon them to ſupply. It is too often ſeen, that what is dignified with the fineſt names, and repreſented as the effect of generoſity, humanity, and compaſſion, is wholly without merit in the giver, pernicious and hurtful to the receiver. How many diſſolute livers are not covetous, only becauſe they are under the dominion of a contrary paſſion ? In the mean time, what they beſtow, is either entirely thrown away by an indiſcriminate profuſion ; or, as is more commonly the caſe, it

is worſe than thrown away, being confined to the moſt worthleſs of all wretches, who are their aſſiſtants or companions in their crimes. In oppoſition to this, a real Chriſtian, ſupremely governed by the love of God, will direct every action to his glory; and while compaſſion, ſtrengthened by a ſenſe of duty, excites him to deal his bread to the hungry, he will have a ſtill ſuperior ſolicitude to preſerve them from ſin. Inſtead of an injudicious ſupply of fuel to their luſt, which is eaſy to a ſlothful, and gratifying to a carnal mind, he will endeavor to fit them for heaven, by ſuitable inſtruction; and reſcue them from want and idleneſs in this world, by lawful induſtry.

Theſe two great purpoſes have been jointly promoted by the ſociety in Scotland for propagating Chriſtian knowledge. They have been promoted with a moſt laudable zeal and diligence, and with a ſucceſs fully equal to the means the ſociety are poſſeſſed or furniſhed with for carrying them on. The promoting of true religion, loyalty, and induſtry, in the highlands of Scotland, was the firſt object of their care: and the importance of encouraging it has been repreſented in the ſtrongeſt light on many former occaſions of this ſort, and is well known. But there is another part of their deſign, to ſpread the knowledge of Chriſt, the only Saviour of ſinners, among the unenlightened Heathen nations. On this, the ſubject of my diſcourſe leads me to ſpeak a little more particularly.

Of the importance of ſuch a deſign every one who believes the goſpel muſt be ſenſible. But, except the very reſtricted efforts of the ſociety, little or nothing has ever been attempted by the Britiſh nation. And is not God, in his righteous providence towards us at preſent, manifeſtly and ſeverely puniſhing us for this neglect? Are we not engaged in war with a potent and formidable neighbor, in which the ſupreme Diſpoſer of all events hath viſibly written diſappointment on every one of our attempts? Did not this war take its riſe from the diſputed limits of our territories in America? And are not our colonies in that part of the world expoſed to the moſt cruel and mercileſs depredations? Are not families, which ought to be

quiet and peaceable habitations, frequently alarmed in the ſilence of the night with the cry of war; and the tendereſt relations often butchered in each other's preſence, and that by a people of a ſtrange language, while the weak mother and helpleſs infant can only lift a ſupplicating eye, but cannot aſk for mercy? Who then are the inſtruments of this cruelty? Muſt we not anſwer, Thoſe very Indians, a great part of whoſe territory we poſſeſs, and whom, with a contempt equally impolitic and unchriſtian, we ſuffer to continue in ignorance of the only living and true God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom he hath ſent?

Such a particular interpretation of the language of Providence may be thought bold; but there are many circumſtances which, in a manner, conſtrain us to confeſs its propriety. We have been a nation early and long favored with the light of divine truth, and are therefore bound to communicate it to others. That diſtant country was a refuge to many of our pious forefathers, when flying from the rage of eccleſiaſtic tyranny; and the territory either taken from, or ceded to us by theſe people, has been the great ſource of wealth and power to this nation. But what ſeems chiefly to warrant this application is, that the care taken by our enemies to convert the Indians, is the chief, if not the ſingle cauſe of their ſuperior intereſt among that people. Their free, independent manner of living, makes the Britiſh temper, character, and cuſtoms, in all other reſpects more agreeable to them. But being once converted, not to the Chriſtian faith, but to the Romiſh ſuperſtition, they are inviolably attached to the French intereſt. And that politic, but fraudulent nation, are able to cover and excuſe their own treacherous deſigns, by the ungovernable and ſavage barbarity of their Indian allies.

Can there be therefore a more noble, a more important, or more neceſſary exerciſe of Chriſtian charity, than enabling the ſociety to carry on their uſeful and ſalutary ſchemes, eſpecially to extend their miſſions to the Indian tribes? Who that knows the value of immortal ſouls, can refuſe to contribute his ſhare in promoting this excellent deſign? Who that fears the juſt judgment and diſpleaſure

of God, can refuſe to take this ſtep, amongſt others, evidently neceſſary for averting his threatened vengeance? And who that loves his Redeemer's name, but muſt deſire that it ſhould be adored from the riſing to the ſetting ſun? The boldneſs and activity of ſinners in ſpreading every ſpecies of corruption, ſhould excite an emulation in believers not to be behind hand in the ſervice of a much better maſter. Have we not ſeen much profane zeal diſcovered in ſupport of the moſt pernicious and criminal amuſements, which conſume time, enervate the body, and pollute the mind? And ſhall there not be a like concern to promote knowledge and holineſs in the uncivilized parts of our own country, and to carry the glad tidings of the goſpel of peace to thoſe who now ſit in darkneſs, and in the region and ſhadow of death? Are there not many to whom the name of a Saviour is precious, "even as "ointment poured forth;" who burn with deſire, that the riches of divine grace, which can never be exhauſted, may be more largely diffuſed? And will not all ſuch chearfully and liberally contribute to extend the bounds of their Redeemer's kingdom, in the proſpect of that bleſſed time, when the knowledge of God ſhall cover the earth as the waters cover the ſea? Or of that ſtill more glorious period, when every veſſel of mercy, from the eaſt, weſt, north and ſouth, ſhall be gathered together, and ſit down with Abraham, and Iſaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of their Father?

I ſhall now conclude my diſcourſe, by preaching this Saviour to all who hear me, and intreating you, in the moſt earneſt manner, to believe in Jeſus Chriſt; "for there "is no ſalvation in any other." This is far from being unneceſſary or improper, even in an audience of profeſſing Chriſtians. Wherever there is a national profeſſion of the goſpel, there are always many who, though they retain the name of Chriſtians, are ſtrangers to real faith in Chriſt, or union with God through him; nay, who in their hearts are enemies to the truth in its ſimplicity and purity. It is in vain to attempt, by reaſoning, to bring men to an acknowledgment of the truth of the Chriſtian doctrine in ſpeculation, unleſs we alſo bring them to ſuch a

perſonal conviction of their guilt and wretchedneſs, as will make them receive the information of Chriſt's character and work, as glad tidings to their own ſouls. No other converts receive any benefit themſelves by the change; nor are they of any ſervice to Chriſt and his cauſe, except ſo far as they are over-ruled by the ſovereign providence of that God who only can "bring good out of evil."

Wherefore, my beloved hearers, be perſuaded, from the word of God, which you profeſs to believe, from the ſtate of the world, which you may ſee, and of your own hearts, which you may feel, that you are by nature wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked. You are ſo far from having ſuch a conformity to the pure and perfect law of God, in your thoughts, words, and actions, and the principles from which they ought to flow, as can entitle you to his favor, that the imaginations of your hearts are only evil from your youth, and that continually. Whatever imaginary ſchemes of a virtuous character you may reſt or glory in, you are wholly unable to ſtand the trial of God's impartial judgment. Oh! how hard is it to convince men of ſin, even while the earth groans under their guilt? Would but thoſe who are moſt apt to boaſt of the dignity of their nature, and the perfection of their virtue, make an exact regiſter of all the thoughts that ariſe in their minds; there remains ſtill as much of the law of God written upon their hearts, as would judge them out of their own mouths. Inſtead of being able to bear that ſuch a record ſhould be expoſed to public view, they could not even endure themſelves to peruſe it: for ſelf-flattery is their ruling character, but ſelf-abhorrence would be the effect of this diſcovery. Ought you not therefore to be ready to acknowledge, that you are altogether as an unclean thing, and unable to ſtand before God if he enter into judgment? But whether you acknowledge it or not, I bear from God himſelf this meſſage to you all, that whatever may be your character, formed upon worldly maxims, and animated by ambitious and worldly views, if you are not reconciled to God through Jeſus Chriſt, if you are not clothed with the ſpotleſs robe of his righteouſneſs, you muſt for ever periſh.

But behold, through this man is preached unto you the forgiveneſs of ſins. There is a fulneſs of merit in his obedience and death to procure your pardon. There is no ſin of ſo deep a dye, or ſo infectious a ſtain, but his blood is ſufficient to waſh it out. This is no new doctrine, or modern diſcovery, to gratify a curious mind. Perhaps you have heard ſuch things ſo often, that you nauſeate and diſdain the repetition. But they are the words of eternal life, on which your ſouls' ſalvation abſolutely depends; and therefore, though this call ſhould come but once more to be rejected, it is yet again within your offer; and as "an "ambaſſador from Chriſt, as though God did beſeech you "by me, I pray you in Chriſt's ſtead be ye reconciled unto "God." You have heard the danger of all who are without Chriſt; but I beſeech you remember the aggravated guilt, and the ſuperior danger of thoſe who continue obſtinate under the goſpel. All the mercy that is ſhown to ſinners in the offer, ſhall inflame the charge againſt them in the great day, if they are found impenitent. Mercy and juſtice are never ſeparated in any part of the goſpel plan. They illuſtrate each other in the contrivance, they ſhine together on the croſs, and they ſhall be jointly manifeſt in the day of judgment. Shall not the blood of Chriſt, which is ſo powerful in its influence for taking away the guilt of thoſe who truſt in it, greatly add to the guilt and danger of thoſe who deſpiſe it? "Be wiſe now, "therefore, O ye kings," and all of every rank; "be in-"ſtructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with "fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiſs the Son, leſt he "be angry, and ye periſh from the way, when his wrath "is kindled but a little: bleſſed are all they that put their "truſt in him."*

* Pſal. ii. 10, 11, 12.

THE TRIAL of RELIGIOUS TRUTH BY ITS MORAL INFLUENCE.

A

SERMON,

Preached at the opening of the Synod of Glasgow and Air, October 9th, 1759.

MATTHEW vii. 20.

Wherefore, by their fruits ye shall know them.

EVERY one who hath any acquaintance with the writings of infidels, muſt know that there is no topic on which they inſiſt at greater length, or with more plauſibility, than the innumerable ſects and parties into which the Chriſtian world is divided. With what apparent triumph do they enlarge, on the contradictory tenets, which different perſons profeſs to found upon the ſame ſcriptures, their violent oppoſition one to another, and the great difficulty, or rather impoſſibility of diſcovering truth, among ſo many, who pretend each to have the entire and excluſive poſſeſſion of it.

Having gone thus far, it is eaſy and natural to proceed one ſtep farther, and affirm, that the great plurality of every denomination, do not embrace religion in general, or the tenets of their own ſect in particular, from rational or perſonal conviction, but from a blind imitation of others, or an attachment to one or a few diſtinguiſhed leaders, whoſe authority is ſtronger than all other evidence whatever. Thus is religion, at once, ſuppoſed true and yet deſtroyed; that is to ſay, it is at one ſtroke, as it were, annihilated, in almoſt all who profeſs it, their opinions, what-

ver they are in themſelves, being no more than implicit faith and party prejudice in thoſe who embrace them.

The ſame viſible ſtate of the world, which gives occaſion of triumph to the enemies of religion, gives often, no ſmall uneaſineſs and anxiety to its friends, particularly to the beſt and moſt diſpaſſionate of every party. Serious and conſcientious perſons, when they reflect upon the diviſions that prevail, when they are witneſſes to the contention and mutual accuſation of different parties, are ready to be overwhelmed with melancholy upon the proſpect, as well as involved in doubt and perplexity, as to what courſe they themſelves ſhould hold. It is not uncommon to find perſons of every rank in this ſituation, not only thoſe of better education, who are able to take an extenſive view of the ſtate of things, in this and in preceding ages; but alſo thoſe of leſs knowledge and comprehenſion, when any violent debates happen to fall within the ſphere of their own obſervation.

Theſe reaſons have induced me to make choice of the paſſage now read as the ſubject of diſcourſe at this time. It contains the rule to which our Saviour appeals in his controverſy with the Phariſees, and by which he, once and again, deſires that their pretenſions may be judged. I apprehend from the context, that it is equally applicable to their characters and their principles, their integrity before God in their offices of teachers of others, and the ſoundneſs of their doctrine as to its effects upon thoſe who ſhould receive it. Theſe two things are, indeed, in a great meaſure connected together, or rather they are mutually involved in one another, though it is poſſible, and, in ſome few caſes, profitable, to make a diſtinction between them.

What is further propoſed, through the aſſiſtance of divine grace, in the proſecution of this ſubject, is,

I. To ſhow, that the rule here given by our Saviour is the beſt that could have been given, and that it is ſufficient to diſtinguiſh truth from error.

II. That this is in fact the rule by which all good men, and, indeed, mankind in general, ſo far as they are ſincere, do judge, of religious principles and pretenſions.

III. To conclude with ſome reflections on the ſubject for the benefit both of miniſters and people.

In the firſt place then it is propoſed to ſhow, That the rule here given by our Saviour is the beſt that could have been given, and that it is ſufficient to diſtinguiſh truth from error. To lay a foundation for this, it will be neceſſary to begin by ſettling, in a as preciſe a manner as poſſible, the meaning of the rule, and to what caſes it can be juſtly applied. "Ye ſhall know them by their fruits," ſaith our Saviour.—That is to ſay, when any perſon aſſumes the character of a divine teacher, and propoſes any thing to your belief, as from God, ſee whether its fruits be really ſuitable to its pretenſions: particularly you are to lay down this as a principle, that, as he is holy in his nature, every thing that proceeds from him muſt be holy in its tendency, and produce holineſs as its fruit. In proportion as you ſee this effect in him who teaches it, and thoſe who embrace it, ſo receive it as true, or reject it as falſe.

By laying down the rule in theſe terms, I do not mean to deny, that, when a revelation is firſt propoſed as from God, or when the credit of ſuch revelation in general is examined, miracles are a diſtinct and concluſive proof of a divine commiſſion. I am perſuaded that nothing is more vague and indeterminate, and at the ſame time, a more manifeſt inverting the natural order of things, than to ſay with ſome, We muſt judge of the truth of a miracle by the nature of the doctrine in ſupport of which it is wrought; and, if this laſt is worthy of God, we may then admit the honorary teſtimony of the mighty work in its behalf. They do not attend to the great ignorance of man in all ſpiritual and divine things without revelation, and to the boldneſs of human pride, who ſpeak in this manner. I would rather include this as one of the proper fruits of a divine commiſſion to teach any new doctrine, that ſigns be given of a ſuperior power accompanying the prophet. Thus we ſee the Jews made this demand of our Saviour, "What ſign ſheweſt thou then, that we may ſee and be-"lieve thee? What doſt thou work?"* It is true, in

* John vi. 30.

ſome inſtances, when, after many miracles, they perſiſted in aſking new ſigns of their own deviſing, he condemns their obſtinacy and refuſes to gratify it. Notwithſtanding this, we find him often appealing to his works as an atteſtation of the truth of his miſſion: thus he ſays, "Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me, "or elſe believe me for the very work's ſake."* And elſewhere, "If I had not done among them the works that "none other man did, they had not had ſin: but now "they have both ſeen, and hated both me and my Fa-"ther."† Agreeably to this, we find Nicodemus drawing the concluſion, "Rabbi, we know thou art a teacher "come from God, for no man can do the miracles that "thou doſt, except God be with him."‡

There is no doubt, however, that this muſt be inſeparably joined with a purity of character, and ſanctity of purpoſe. When theſe are wanting, it gives the juſteſt ground of ſuſpicion, leads to the ſtricteſt examination of miraculous pretenſions, and will certainly end in the diſcovery of ſuch as are falſe. For this is the very excellence of the rule laid down by our Saviour, that, though reaſon may be very unfit to paſs an independent judgment upon truth and error, conſcience may, with little danger of miſtake, reject what is evil, and yield its approbation to what is good.

But what I have chiefly in view is, that ſuppoſing the truth of the goſpel in general, particular opinions and practices muſt be tried in this manner. As the goſpel is allowed on all hands to be a doctrine according to godlineſs, when differences ariſe, and each oppoſite ſide pretends to have the letter of the law in its favor, the great rule of deciſion is, which doth moſt immediately and moſt certainly, promote piety and holineſs in all manner of converſation. In this way every doctrinal opinion, every form of government, and every rite and practice in worſhip, may be brought to the teſt, and tried by its fruits.

As opinions, ſo characters, muſt be tried in the ſame manner. The truth is this, though deſerving particular

* John xiv. 11. † John xv. 24. ‡ John iii. 2.

mention, is included in, or is but a part and branch of the other. To pafs a judgment on particular characters is of very fmall moment, or rather, a peremptory decifion of this kind is both unneceffary and improper, unlefs when it is of weight in a cauſe. It is only prophets and teachers that fall to be fingly, or perfonally tried, becauſe they are fuppofed to exhibit, in their own practice, an example of the force and influence of their principles. If on them they have no effect that is good, there is not the leaft pretence for infifting that others fhould embrace them.

Nothing farther feems neceffary by way of explication of this rule, fave to obferve from the context, that fair and plaufible pretences, either of opinions or characters, muft be examined with particular care, as being moft ready to deceive; and the trial muft be more by facts than by reafoning, as is implied in the very language ufed in the text, "By their fruits ye fhall know them."

The excellency of this rule may be comprehended under the two following particulars, 1ft, Its certainty. 2dly, Its perfpicuity.

The firft of thefe will admit of little difpute. As God is infinitely holy in his own nature, every difcovery that he has made to any of his creatures, muft carry this impreffion upon it, and have a tendency to promote holinefs in them. And, as this is manifeftly the defign of the facred oracles, and that fyftem of divine truth which they contain, every thing by way of opinion, or practice, that pretends to derive its authority from them, may lawfully be tried by this rule, Will it make us more holy than before?

It is of moment here to obferve, that this rule hath a deep and folid foundation. It proceeds upon the fuppofition, that all natural are inferior to moral qualities; that even the nobleft intellectual abilities are only fo far valuable, as they are fubfervient to moral perfection; or in other words, that truth is in order to goodnefs. It is not (as has been often faid) in his Almighty power, his infinite wifdom, or the immenfity of his being, that the glory of God chiefly confifts, but in his immaculate holinefs and fpotlefs purity. Each part of the divine character, in-

deed, derives a luſtre from the other. It is the union of greatneſs and goodneſs, that makes him truly God. His moral excellence becomes infinite in value and efficacy by reſiding in an infinite object. But if it were poſſible to ſeparate his natural perfection from his moral excellence, or could we ſuppoſe them joined to malignity of diſpoſition, he would be the proper object (let us ſpeak it with reverence) not of ſupreme love, but of infinite deteſtation.

This is more than ſufficient to ſupport the order in which things are repreſented above, and ſhow, that its moral influence is the proper touchſtone and trial of religious truth. Theſe doctrines only come from God, which tend to form us after the divine image. Thus far, perhaps, all will allow it to be true; at leaſt the aſſertion is common. But be pleaſed to obſerve, that this neceſſarily ſuppoſes the ſure and infallible efficacy of real truth in promoting holineſs, and the inſufficiency of error and falſhood for this purpoſe. If theſe were not both alike certain, the rule would be equivocal and abſurd. If men by believing lies could attain to unfeigned goodneſs and true holineſs, then their moral effect could not in the leaſt ſerve to diſtinguiſh between truth and error. It is no leſs plain that if ſo abſurd a ſuppoſition is admitted but for a moment, the value of truth is wholly deſtroyed, and no wiſe man will employ his time and pains in endeavoring to diſcover, to communicate, or to defend it.

The other particular comprehended under the excellence of this rule, is its perſpicuity; That, it is not only ſure and infallible in itſelf, but capable of an eaſy application by thoſe who have occaſion to uſe it. Here, if any where, there is room for doubt and diſputation. Here, it may be alledged, all the confuſion and uncertainty returns, which was before complained of, and for which a remedy was required. Men will ſtill differ in their opinions as to what is true goodneſs. Beſides, they will ſtill debate the ſincerity of many pretenſions, and the reality of many appearances; and, as art and hypocriſy will always be uſed on the one hand, deluſion muſt be the unavoidable conſequence on the other.

This, however, is no more than the neceſſary conſequence of human imperfection. It cannot be denied, and it may, without any heſitation, be confeſſed, that men are liable to err, and that many have erred in the application of this rule. But, who can from thence juſtly infer, that it is not of ſufficient clearneſs, to direct thoſe who will honeſtly make uſe of it, and to lay the error of thoſe who are miſled entirely at their own door?

It pleaſed God to write his law upon the heart of man at firſt. And the great lines of duty, however obſcured by our original apoſtacy, are ſtill ſo viſible, as to afford an opportunity of judging, what conduct and practice is, or is not agreeable to its dictates. It will be found from experience, that men are able to determine on this point, with far greater certainty, than on any other ſubject of religion: that is to ſay, they can perceive the excellency of the end, when they are in much doubt about the means, in themſelves, or ſeparately conſidered.

Such authority hath natural conſcience ſtill in man, that it renders thoſe who, in their own conduct, deſpiſe its reproofs, inexcuſeable in the ſight of God.* But it is of importance in the preſent argument to obſerve, that every one is able to paſs a far ſurer judgment on the moral character of another, than his own. The pollution of the heart brings a corrupt biaſs on the judgment, in a man's own caſe, and makes him palliate and defend thoſe ſins, to which he is ſtrongly inclined, or of which he hath been already guilty: whereas in determining the characters of others, this biaſs is leſs ſenſibly felt. This is perhaps the true and only reaſon why any deference is paid to virtue as praiſe-worthy, by thoſe who are enemies to it in their hearts, or any public honor and reſpect given to to the ſervice of God in the world, where ſo great a majority are evidently in the intereſts of another maſter.

One ſingular excellence of this rule is, its being the moſt univerſally intelligible. It is level to the capacity of men of all degrees of underſtanding. There is little difference, if any, in this reſpect, between the wiſe and the

* Rom. i. 20.—ii. 14.

unwiſe, the learned and the ignorant. Perhaps this circumſtance alone ought to give it, in juſtice, the preference, to every other teſt of religious truth. Religion is the concern of all alike, and therefore, what relates to it ſhould be open to all. It was the character, and the glory of the goſpel, at its firſt publication, that it was preached to the poor. And by this it is ſtill diſtinguiſhed, not only from many or moſt falſe religions, but eſpecially from thoſe philoſophical ſpeculations, in which the enemies of all religion place their chief ſtrength. When we peruſe a ſyſtem or theory of moral virtue, the principles of which are very refined, or the reaſoning upon it abſtracted and above the comprehenſion of the vulgar, it may be ingenious, but it carries in itſelf a demonſtration, that, becauſe it is unfit, it could never be intended for general uſe.

Here then, lies the great advantage of the rule laid down by our Saviour. The bulk of mankind, thoſe of lower rank, and even thoſe among them of weakeſt or leaſt cultivated underſtanding, are able to judge of the effects of principles, or to ſee the beauty of an excellent character, when they are not able to examine ā doctrine, or apprehend the reaſoning upon which it is founded. The dictates of conſcience are often immediate and clear, when the deductions of reaſon are long and involved. To make intricate reſearches in theory, requires great natural abilities, which are the portion of very few: but to judge of a viſible character requires only an impartial ſenſe of right and wrong. Of this the plain man is as ſuſceptible as the moſt acute by nature, or the moſt enlightened by education. In God Almighty, infinite knowledge and infinite holineſs are united, and, we have reaſon to think, that in their perfection they are inſeparable. But we know, by experience, that they do not bear an exact proportion to one another in inferior natures, at leaſt, among ſinful creatures. There may bé, and there often is, great virtue and goodneſs in a mean capacity, and great depravity in perſons of eminent ability.

From theſe conſiderations it is plain, that this rule of trying a doctrine by its effects, as a tree by its fruits, may be applied by the meaneſt as well as the greateſt, and

with as little danger of miſtake. Perhaps it might have been ſafely affirmed with leſs danger of miſtake. Great intellectual abilities, and great natural advantages of every kind, are very ready to ſwell the mind with pride and ſelf-conceit, than which no diſpoſition is, in itſelf more odious in the ſight of God, or more unfavorable to the diſcovery of truth. This ſeems to be confirmed by experience, and it is plainly the view given us of our preſent ſtate in the holy Scriptures. Thus the apoſtle Paul ſays, "Ye ſee your calling, brethren, how that not many wiſe "men after the fleſh, not many mighty, not many noble "are called. But God hath choſen the fooliſh things of "the world, to confound the wiſe; and God hath choſen "the weak things of the world to confound the things "which are mighty, and baſe things of the world, and "things which are deſpiſed hath God choſen, yea, and "things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: "that no fleſh ſhould glory in his preſence."* For the very ſame thing we find our bleſſed Redeemer adoring the depth and ſovereignty of divine Providence, in the following terms, "In that hour Jeſus rejoiced in ſpirit, and "ſaid, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, "that thou haſt hid theſe things from the wiſe and pru"dent, and haſt revealed them unto babes: even ſo, Fa"ther, for ſo it ſeemed good in thy ſight."†

Miſtakes, however, after all there will be, and ſome differences even among the beſt; but, from this very circumſtance, I derive another great excellence of the above rule laid down, that, it is not only the teſt of truth for a man's ſelf, but the meaſure of forbearance with regard to others. By carefully examining their fruits, men may not only be directed what to embrace, and what capital and fundamental errors wholly to reject, but alſo in what particulars to exerciſe mutual forbearance, and, though ſmaller differences ſtill ſubſiſt, to receive one another to the glory of God. If in any perſon or perſons, of whatever party, you perceive the ſpirit of true and undefiled re-

* 1 Cor. i. 26.—29. † Luke x. 21.

ligion, they are accepted of God, and ſhould not be condemned by you. This ought not, in juſtice, to induce you to approve or embrace every one of their principles, or every part of their practice, of which perhaps you have ſeen or felt the bad tendency; yet ſhould it engage you to love them with unfeigned affection as ſincere, though, in ſome meaſure, miſtaken ſervants of our common Lord.

I hope it appears from the preceding obſervations, that this rule, of trying every principle or profeſſion by its fruits, is the beſt that could have been given. It is certain and infallible in itſelf, and we are leſs liable to miſtake in the uſe of it, than of any other. There ſeems, indeed, to be an exact analogy between this rule in religious matters, and reaſon in our common and civil concerns. Reaſon is the beſt guide and director of human life. There is certainly an eſſential difference between wiſdom and folly, in the nature of things. They are alſo ſenſibly oppoſite to one another in their extremes. Innumerable actions, however, there are, or modes of action, of a more doubtful and diſputable nature, as to the wiſdom or weakneſs of which, hardly any two men would be entirely of the ſame opinion. Let the enemy of religion make the application, who denies its reality, becauſe all good men are not of the ſame mind; or becauſe there are different parties and profeſſions, who oppoſe one another in ſome opinions and practices. He acts juſt the ſame part, as he, who ſeeing the differences of judgment among men, upon almoſt every ſubject that falls under their deliberation, ſhould renounce the uſe of reaſon, or deny that there is in nature, any ſuch thing.

We now proceed to the ſecond thing propoſed, to ſhow, That the rule above explained and defended, is that by which, in fact, all ſerious perſons, and indeed, mankind in general, ſo far as they are ſincere, do judge of religious principles and pretenſions.

By ſerious perſons, I underſtand all thoſe who are truly religious, in oppoſition to thoſe who have only a nominal and cuſtomary profeſſion. If we would ſpeak with preciſion, or reaſon in a juſt and concluſive manner, we muſt keep this diſtinction conſtantly in view. Nothing does

more harm to any cauſe, than a treacherous friend, or boſom enemy: and nothing does more hurt to the intereſt of religion, than its being loaded with a great number, who, for many obvious reaſons, aſſume the form, while they are ſtrangers to the power of it. The fallacy of almoſt all the reaſonings of infidels lies here. They conſider religion as anſwerable for all the hypocriſy of thoſe who profeſs it, and all the wickedneſs of thoſe who have not renounced the profeſſion; as if in order to its being true, it muſt be impoſſible for any to counterfeit it. If that were the caſe, no thanks would be due to impartial enquiry. All color of objection being taken away, the aſſent would not be yielded, but compelled. This, doubtleſs, the preſumptuous wiſdom of man ordinarily dictates, but according to the ſuperior wiſdom of God "offences muſt come" and "hereſies alſo, that they that are approved may be "made manifeſt."

Suppoſing, therefore, the important diſtinction between real and nominal Chriſtians, all of the firſt character, of every age, and of every party, are ſo far from being under the influence of implicit faith, that they try the truth by its fruits, and adhere to it for its effects. There is ſomething more in the caſe of every good man, than barely a rational perſuaſion of the truth of religion in general, from the arguments adduced to ſupport it. The truths of the goſpel give him ſuch a view of himſelf, and his own ſtate, as experience ſhews him to be true. In the goſpel he finds a remedy propoſed for his guilt and miſery, which, beſides all the other evidences of its divine original, is exactly ſuited to his felt condition. Add to both theſe, that he immediately experiences its happy effect, not only in laying the beſt foundation for his peace, but in operating a thorough change in his heart and life. Thus hath every real Chriſtian, an inward and experimental proof of the truth of the goſpel, not contrary, but ſuperior to, ſtronger and more ſtable than any ſpeculative reaſoning. In this ſenſe we are to underſtand the words of the apoſtle John, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witneſs in "himſelf."* This is common to all real believers of

* 1 John v. 9.

whatever denomination, who not only are perfectly agreed in the eſſentials of religion, but much more agreed in every thing material, than they themſelves either clearly apprehend, or are willing to confeſs.

So far every good man muſt be acquitted from the charge of implicit faith; we may adopt concerning all ſuch the words of our Saviour to Peter, "Bleſſed art thou, Simon "Barjona: For fleſh and blood hath not revealed it unto "thee, but my Father which is in heaven."* It is no leſs plain, that in every thing that is ſuppoſed to make a part of, or that hath any connection with religion, they may judge by the ſame rule. In all theſe modes of opinion in leſſer matters, in all theſe circumſtances, which ſerve to diſtinguiſh one ſect from another, though they may determine in different, nay, in oppoſite ways, yet they all proceed upon the ſame general rule, viz. the influence which ſuch diſputed point has, as a means, upon the ſubſtance and end of all religion. This appears from the reaſoning on each ſide, in all religious diſputes. This principle as common to both is often expreſsly mentioned, and always manifeſtly implied that thoſe doctrines, or that way of expreſſing doctrines and thoſe practices, which are in fact moſt conducive to holineſs, are, and for that very reaſon muſt be, moſt agreeable to the will of God.

But what I have chiefly in view is, to ſhow, that this appears from the very fact uſually brought to prove, that the religion of almoſt all mankind is no better than implicit faith. The fact I mean is, that the bulk of mankind is greatly ſwayed in the choice of opinion, by the authority and example of others. This, indeed, does not hold ſo generally as is commonly ſuppoſed. We have ſeen above, that it doth not hold, with regard to the ſubſtance of religion, in any good man; for in this he will call no man maſter on earth. But even when it does hold, it is, perhaps, not ſo blameable as many are apt to imagine. Let it be admitted then, that, in many inſtances, it is the authority and example of men, more than any other reaſon that determines the judgment. Let it be admitted, that

* Matt. xvi. 17.

this is the caſe with the bulk of mankind, and even in ſome meaſure with the beſt. I muſt be allowed to aſk, what is it that procures theſe perſons ſuch authority? What is it that firſt begins, eſtabliſhes, or perpetuates their influence? Nothing elſe, but the real or apparent ſanctity of their character. In vain will a profligate, or one manifeſtly deſtitute of perſonal worth, ſet himſelf at the head of a party, or attempt to draw away diſciples after him. It is the ſuppoſed piety and probity of the perſon that gives weight to his example, and force to his precepts. This weighs more with the ſober ſerious part of mankind, and, indeed, with mankind in general, than the greateſt intellectual abilities, and otherwiſe moſt admired talents. Whoever has acquired a great reputation for piety and ſincerity, will, with little art, or rather no art at all, nay, without ſo much as intending it, bring his principles and practice into repute. At the ſame time, one of a contrary character, with all the powers of eloquence, and every other outward advantage, ſhall fail in attempting to perſuade.

Now what is this, but that mankind proceed mainly in their judgment, upon the very rule which I have endeavored to ſhow is the beſt they could have choſen. They try principles by their effects, as a tree by its fruits. Wherever they ſee the beſt man, they conclude that he muſt be acted by the moſt excellent, as well as the moſt powerful principles. The multitude, or lower claſs of mankind, are uſually the ſcorn of half-thinkers and ſuperficial reaſoners, for this attachment to perſons. But were a compariſon faithfully made between the ſeveral motives of choice in different claſſes, there would be no great cauſe of triumph. When we conſider how unfit the plurality of mankind are to judge in an intricate debate, darkened, perhaps, by the art and ſubtilty of thoſe who handle it, we ſhall find they are little, if at all, to blame. In one view, no doubt, they may be ſaid to be acted by implicit faith, but in truth, and at bottom, they are following the wiſeſt and moſt ſalutary of all moral maxims.

A ſurvey of the hiſtory, either of religion in general, or of the Chriſtian religion in particular, would ſet this mat-

ter in the cleareſt light. But little of this kind can come within the limits of a ſingle diſcourſe. I ſhall not therefore ſtay to mention the retired manner of life, and pretended ſanctity of the inventors of the heathen idolatry, though it may be applied to this ſubject; and would ſerve to ſhew the univerſal ſenſe, and general expectation of mankind. There is a ſaying of an eminent and violent enemy of the Chriſtian faith, "That gravity is of the very "eſſence of impoſture." This is nothing elſe but a perverted view, and malicious repreſentation of the general truth, that apparent ſanctity is neceſſary to eſtabliſh any ſacred authority. But is there any thing more unqueſtionable, or that hath been more frequently obſerved, than that the victory of truth over error, in the firſt ages of Chriſtianity, was much more owing to the ſhining piety of the primitive Chriſtians in general, together with the patience and conſtancy of the martyrs, than to any other means. Reaſon may convince the underſtanding, but example ſeizes and keeps poſſeſſion of the heart. It was the eminent piety and uſefulneſs of the ſaints in former ages, which attracted ſuch veneration and love from the multitude, as ſoon proceeded to a criminal exceſs. Not content with imitating the amiable example of thoſe whom they held in ſuch eſteem, by a natural aſſociation they affixed a ſanctity to relics, and this produced a variety of ſuperſtitious practices. I cannot alſo help being of opinion, that it was the ſevere and mortified lives of many of the retired devotees in the Romiſh church, that kept that corrupt body in credit for ſome ages longer than it could have otherwiſe continued.

On the other hand, who does not know, that the moſt formidable and ſucceſsful attacks made by the reformers on that mother of abominations, were their expoſing the corrupt and diſſolute lives of her prieſts and members. This they were at no ſmall pains to do, both in a grave and in an ironical ſtrain. As the covetouſneſs and ambition of many, and the licentious debauchery of others of the clergy, firſt brought the doctrines into ſuſpicion, ſo thoſe examples when held up to light, made a far greater number of converts, than any abſurdities in belief, how

groſs and palpable ſoever. The truth is, we find all parties greedily lay hold of this weapon whenever it is preſented to them, and uſe it with great confidence againſt their adverſaries; and in ſo doing they diſcover a conviction, that principles are never ſo powerfully ſupported as by the good, nor ſo effectually diſparaged as by the bad characters of thoſe who profeſs them.

If we leave the hiſtory of former ages, and examine the ſtate of the preſent, the ſame truth will ſtill be the reſult of our enquiry, and appear with increaſing evidence. Different parties and denominations prevail in different places: and wherever any party or denomination greatly prevails, the effect may eaſily be traced up to its cauſe; and will appear, by no very diſtant tradition, to have been owing to the eminent piety of ſome one or more of that profeſſion in a former period, or, which is much the ſame, to the comparatively odious and vicious characters of thoſe who oppoſed them.*

* Our own country will afford us ſome ſenſible and ſtriking proofs of the juſtice of this obſervation. There had been a ſtruggle, from the very firſt dawn of the reformation, between preſbytery and epiſcopacy in Scotland. This conteſt however came to its greateſt height about 100 years ago, when the preſbyterians were ejected, and epiſcopacy was eſtabliſhed by a tyrannical civil government, and continued by a ſevere and cruel perſecution. We had by this means a trial of both: and it is very obſervable, that the odium which juſtly fell upon epiſcopacy, from the rage and inhumanity of thoſe who had the chief direction, was the circumſtance that determined the body of the nation to endeavor its ſubverſion. Yet, wherever there happened to be a few miniſters of that perſuaſion pious in their lives, and diligent in the duties of their office, there were many perſons and families who joined with them in communion, and their poſterity adhere to that opinion even to this day. This was the caſe in ſome places of the eaſt and north country. But in the weſtern parts of Scotland, where the epiſcopal clergy were, almoſt to a man, ignorant, ſlothful or vicious, they were univerſally deſerted, and hardly a ſingle adherent to that perſuaſion is now to be found.——I cannot omit mentioning here what was ſaid by a lady of quality at that time to Dr. Burnet, when he came to viſit the weſt country. It was to the following purpoſe: "We of the "laity cannot judge upon controverſial points, but we ſee theſe men "whom you perſecute, grave in their deportment, ſtrictly holy in their "converſation, and very laborious in their functions, while many of "your clergy are ignorant, ſlothful and vicious." This is what determines the judgment of the people.

It is no juſt objection to the account here given, that we find inſtances in which principles ſeem to give a ſanction to characters, inſtead of receiving ſupport from them. There are, no doubt, caſes in which a man's being known to embrace certain principles, will be alone ſufficient to make him odious, however blameleſs, or even praiſe-worthy his conduct be, in every other reſpect. At the ſame time, perhaps, the failings of another ſhall be either wholly pardoned, or greatly extenuated, if he eſpouſe, but eſpecially, if he is active in vindicating the principles which are held ſacred. But this is no more than the natural and neceſſary conſequence of any ſet of principles being once firmly eſtabliſhed. They acquire their credit at firſt, in the way I have already mentioned; but when that credit is high, it will bring a ſuſpicion upon every thing that oppoſes it, however ſpecious and promiſing in outward appearance. There is nothing ſurpriſing here, nor, indeed, any thing but what is perfectly natural; for, as one or a few inſtances commonly do not, ſo in reaſon they ought not to ſhake the reputation of truths, which have been eſtabliſhed by long experience of their worth and efficacy. Neither muſt it be forgotten, that when examples ſeem to ſtand in oppoſition one to another, and to lead to different concluſions, it is not from one or two that a judgment can be paſſed, but from many, and theſe compared and examined with great diligence and care.

I conclude the illuſtration of this head with remarking, that the principle above laid down will explain, in a clear and ſatisfying manner, two appearances in the moral world, which ſeem directly to contradict one another. By what happens ſometimes in religion, we ſhall be apt to conclude, that there is in human nature a proneneſs to change, or a love of novelty purely on its own account. Accordingly we find this laid to the charge of mankind by ſeveral authors. And it cannot be denied, that ſome men, or ſects, often introduce new practices which acquire great reputation, and almoſt univerſal acceptance. By other examples, however, we are taught to aſcribe to human nature a ſtrong attachment to old opinions, and hatred of all innovation. What is remarkable is, that

both theſe take place chiefly in little circumſtances, and things of ſmall moment; new inventions being ſometimes gone into with a zeal, and old cuſtoms adhered to with an obſtinacy, which the intrinſic value of the things contended for does not ſeem to merit on either ſide. To aſcribe this to the different diſpoſitions of individuals will not be a ſatisfactory ſolution, for we ſee ſometimes examples of both in the ſame perſons. But, by ſearching a little deeper, we ſhall unravel this difficulty, and diſcover, that though the love of novelty, or a veneration for antiquity, may be ſometimes the immediate principle of action, there is another ultimate principle which is the cauſe of both, and in different circumſtances, produces either the one or the other. This principle is no other than that admiration of real or ſuppoſed worth, which has been illuſtrated above. Whoever hath acquired a great reputation for piety and holineſs, may eaſily introduce any indifferent practice, though not common before, eſpecially if it be conſidered as an evidence or expreſſion of his piety. On this ſuppoſition, his differing from, or doing more than others, will be taken notice of to his praiſe.* But he may much more eaſily introduce a new, than depart from an old cuſtom. The reaſon is plain; for ancient cuſtoms having been eſtabliſhed on the ground already aſſigned, men are uſually very tenacious of them, and it requires no ſmall degree of credit and character, either to change or to aboliſh them.

We now proceed to make ſome practical improvement of what has been ſaid.

In the firſt place, from what has been ſaid upon this ſubject, we may derive one of the plaineſt and moſt ſatisfying proofs of the truth of the goſpel. A proof, level to the meaneſt capacity, and therefore proper to preſerve or-

* There is great reaſon to think that it was in this very way that many different rites were brought into the Chriſtian church, which in a long courſe of time grew into a maſs of abominable ſuperſtition. They were at firſt, perhaps, but the modes or circumſtances of the worſhip, or practice of pious perſons, but from being voluntary and purely circumſtantial, they came by degrees to be conſidered as parts of religious worſhip; and therefore ſinful in the performers, but much more ſinful in the impoſers.

dinary Chriſtians from being ſhaken by the bold and inſolent attacks now made on religion by ſome of the loweſt rank. A proof, at the ſame time, not only deſerving the attention of the moſt intelligent, but which of all others, is certainly the moſt deciſive. Let us try it by its fruits. Let us compare the temper and character of real Chriſtians, with thoſe of infidels, and ſee which of them beſt merits the approbation of an honeſt and impartial judge. Let us take in every circumſtance that will contribute to make the compariſon juſt and fair, and ſee what will be the reſult. I ſay this, becauſe I can by no means allow, that great multitudes though born in a country where Chriſtianity is profeſſed, ought to be conſidered as Chriſtians, when they are open and violent enemies to the goſpel in all its parts. They ought rather to be thrown into the ſcale of infidelity. But, ſince moſt of them have formed no fixed principles at all, becauſe they have never thought upon the ſubject, we ſhall leave them entirely out of the queſtion.

Is then the character and practice of infidels in general, once to be compared with that of ſuch Chriſtians as believe upon perſonal conviction? However much the natural ſenſe of right and wrong may be obſcured and perverted in ſome, I ſhould think there are very few who will not manifeſtly perceive to whom the preference is due. In which of the two do you find the moſt regular and fervent piety towards God? Here, perhaps, it will be ſaid, This is what no man expects to find in unbelievers, it is no part of their plan, and therefore ought not to be included in the compariſon. But as the general ſenſe of mankind does not require it, ſo I can never ſuffer that our duty to God ſhould be eraſed out of the moral law. Beſides, the general pretence now, is not atheiſm but theiſm. The queſtion is therefore altogether pertinent; and perſons of this character are ſelf-condemned, who, by their total neglect of all religious worſhip, are as much chargeable with impiety as infidelity.—In which of the two is to be found the greateſt integrity and uprightneſs in their commerce between man and man, the moſt unfeigned good-will, and moſt active beneficence to others?

Is it the unbeliever or the Chriſtian, who clothes the naked and deals his bread to the hungry? Aſk the many and noble ancient ſtructures raiſed for the relief of the diſeaſed and the poor, to whom they owe their eſtabliſhment and ſupport?——Which of theſe two claſſes of men are moſt remarkable for ſelf-government? How often is the unexperienced youth initiated in debauchery of all kinds, by theſe very friends of mankind, who charitably diſclaim againſt prieſtcraft and deluſion, and happily eradicate the prejudices of education, by treating religion and all religious perſons with deriſion and ſcorn? With what fatal ſucceſs has the infidel often ſeduced the unwary virgin unto the deſtructive path of luſt, by firſt looſening the obligation of religion, and then juſtifying the indulgence of every natural deſire. We ſhall carry the compariſon no further in this place; but I muſt beg of every one who hath had the happineſs to be acquainted with an eminently pious, humble, active, uſeful Chriſtian, to ſay, whether he can admit it as poſſible, under the adminiſtration of a wiſe and good God, that ſuch a perſon is governed by a fable invented by deſigning villains, while the infidel alone is in poſſeſſion of the truth, which is pure in its nature, and muſt be proved by its fruits.*

* I am ſenſible it is often pretended, that ſeveral infidels have been men of unblemiſhed morals. Collins was a good man, ſays ſome, and Shafteſbury was yet a better man. Perhaps, theſe individuals might not be chargeable with the moſt open diſſolution, and groſſeſt ſenſuality, which would have been inconſiſtent with their giving themſelves to cloſe ſtudy and application. Beſides, they who aſſaulted with ſo much boldneſs, eſtabliſhed opinions, muſt have been under a conſiderable reſtraint, from a regard to their character and cauſe. This ought not to be rejected as an improbable ſuppoſition, or uncharitable allegation againſt them who ſo liberally reproach others, with inſincere, hypocritical, and ſaint-like pretences. But, after all, making even the largeſt allowances, there is one piece of conduct, of which both the above-named perſons were habitually guilty, which it is impoſſible for me to reconcile with good morals, even upon the laxeſt principles that have ever yet been avowed. What I mean was, their ſolemnly receiving the holy ſacrament, to qualify themſelves for bearing office in their country, though they believed it to be altogether impoſture and deceit. This was ſuch a piece of groſs and aggravated diſſimulation, as it is impoſſible either to defend in itſelf, or to ſuppoſe conſiſtent with integrity upon the whole.

In the 2d place, ſince not only religion is general, but every particular doctrine of religion ought to be tried by its fruits, let neither miniſters nor people, ever loſe view of this great rule in the doctrines which they teach on the one hand, or embrace on the other. Let us alſo particularly remember, that no credit is to be given to any high profeſſions or bold pretences, but as they are confirmed by the fact. I obſerve here, with much pleaſure, what advantage the fundamental Scripture doctrines, which have been long the glory and happineſs of this church, will derive from a fair and full enquiry into their influence and effects. The doctrines I mean are, the loſt ſtate of man by nature; ſalvation by the free grace of God; juſtification by the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt; and ſanctification by the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit. Theſe were the doctrines of the reformation, when their excellence was put beyond all doubt or queſtion, by their powerful and valuable effects. Many adverſaries indeed, ſoon roſe up to contradict or to corrupt them; and it is much to be lamented that they are, at preſent, by many, ſo boldly and ſo violently oppoſed in this once happy iſland. But we may venture to affirm, that when the doctrine of the croſs retained its purity and ſimplicity, then was true religion, including every moral virtue, ſeen to grow from it as its fruit. On the other hand, when and wherever it has been run down, and a pretended moral doctrine has been introduced, to the prejudice and ſubverſion of the grace of God, it hath been always followed by a deluge of profaneneſs and immorality in practice. It is eaſy and common to diſguiſe the truth by miſrepreſentation, or to villify it by opprobrious titles. It is eaſy to pretend a warm zeal for the great doctrines of morality, and frequently to repeat, in a pulpit, the neceſſity of holineſs in general; but all impartial perſons ought, and the world in general will judge more by works than by words. Let us ſuppoſe, for example, the old objection revived againſt a miniſter who preaches the doctrine of grace, that it looſens the obligations to holineſs of life. The objection is, of all others, the moſt ſpecious: yet, if that miniſter diſcharges his duty with zeal and diligence,

watches over his people's ſouls, reproving, rebuking, exhorting with all long ſuffering and doctrine; is ſtrict and holy in his own converſation, abhorring and flying from the ſociety of the ungodly; and if the effect of his miniſtry be to turn many ſinners from the error of their ways, and to make an intelligent, ſerious, regular people, the accuſation will not be received: and who will ſay that it ought? On the other hand, is any miniſter more covetous of the fleece, than diligent for the welfare of the flock; cold and heartleſs in his ſacred work, but loud and noiſy in promiſcuous and fooliſh converſation; careleſs or partial in the exerciſe of diſcipline; covering or palliating the ſins of the great, becauſe they may promote him; making friends and companions of profane perſons; though this man's zeal ſhould burn like a flame againſt Antinomianiſm, and though his own unvaried ſtrain ſhould be the neceſſity of holineſs, I would never take him to be any of its real friends.

Let us not, my brethren, deceive ourſelves, or attempt to deceive others by plauſible pretences. Let us all be zealous for good works; not the name, but the thing. Let us not expect to promote them by a little cold reaſoning, or affected flowery declamation; but by the ſimplicity of the goſpel; by the doctrine of the croſs, which will not only tell men that they ought to be holy, but effectually bring them to that happy ſtate. The leading principle of true holineſs, according to the goſpel, is a deep and grateful ſenſe of redeeming love. "For the love of Chriſt "conſtraineth us, becauſe we thus judge, that if one died "for all then were all dead: and that he died for all, that "they which live, ſhould not henceforth live unto themſelves, but unto him which died for them, and roſe "again."*

In the 3d place, from what has been ſaid on this ſubject you may ſee, in a very ſtrong light, how neceſſary it is, that miniſters ſhould be, not only really but viſibly and eminently holy; and with how much care they are bound to avoid every appearance of evil. There are ſome mi-

* 2 Cor. v. 14.

niſters who ſtrongly plead for liberty and freedom, and loudly complain of the malice, uncharitableneſs, and cenſorioufneſs of the world. They ſeem as if they deſired, nay, which is ſtill more fooliſh, expected, that no part of their conduct ſhould be attended to, or any inference drawn from it with reſpect to their character. This will never be the caſe till they are inviſible. It appears, from what hath been ſaid in the preceding diſcourſe, that it is the right and the duty of every man to try a miniſter by his fruits. Ignorance indeed, may ſometimes be guilty of miſtakes to our prejudice, and malice or envy may go too far; yet this is only what we ought to lay our account with, and it ſhould excite us, not to a contempt of the judgment of others, but to greater ſtrictneſs and circumſpection, that "they may be aſhamed who falſely accuſe "our good converſation in Chriſt."

It is very hurtful in this as in many other caſes, when a man views things only on one ſide. Some are apt to impute ſo much to the malice and uncharitableneſs of the world, that they ſeldom or never think themſelves as truly guilty of any offence or miſcarriage. I am perſuaded many are in a manner blinded to the errors of their own conduct, by this very circumſtance. Or, if they cannot but be ſenſible that they have been guilty of ſomething that was wrong, when the fault is aggravated by report, they ſeem to think that this atones for any thing really blameworthy, and ſo are hardened both againſt confeſſion and repentance. To ſpeak without prejudice, it is more than probable, that we are as much chargeable with unguarded and offenſive conduct, on the one hand, as the world with precipitate or partial judgment on the other. It hath been ſometimes obſerved, that the multitude or common people are but poor judges of a man's ability or learning, but they are very good judges of his life. There is a great deal of truth in this obſervation; and to ſupport it I add, that even a hypocritical pretence is extremely hard to maintain, and ſo often betrays itſelf by little circumſtances, that there are very few whoſe real character is not better underſtood by the world than themſelves. The chief exception I know to this is the caſe of violent party diſputes. The

injuſtice done to characters on each ſide there, is very great. If you take a man's character from one to whom he ſtands in party oppoſition, you muſt conceive him not a man but a monſter. But (ſetting this aſide, which does not fall within the compaſs of our preſent ſubject) in general, it is ſurely much more becoming, and it is infinitely more ſafe for us to ſuſpect ourſelves, than to complain of hard meaſure from the world. Let us therefore, by doubling our diligence in every perſonal and miniſterial duty, endeavor to "make our light ſo ſhine before men, that "they may ſee our good works, and glorify our Father "which is in heaven."*

In the 4th place I muſt now take the liberty, in fidelity to the truſt committed to me, to be a little more particular in the application of this ſubject, and to enquire, whether miniſters are not, in a good meaſure, chargeable with the low ſtate to which religion is at preſent reduced. May I not ſay without offence, that an eminent, holy, diligent, and ſucceſsful goſpel miniſtry was once the glory and bleſſing of this part of the united kingdom! But how are we ſince fallen aſleep! "How is the gold become "dim! How is the moſt fine gold changed!" That there is a difference is plain; and that this difference does not lie in inferior abilities or a leſs proportion of learning, is equally certain. I am ſenſible, that this is a part of my ſubject which would require to be touched with a very tender and delicate hand, and that, perhaps, I run as great a hazard to inflame and exaſperate the ſore, as to bring any effectual cure. This is, indeed, itſelf, one ſtrong ſymptom of our diſeaſe, that we cannot endure plain dealing; and there is not a ſingle circumſtance, in which there is a greater difference between this and the preceding age. What in former times would have been reckoned (to ſpeak in their language) no more than plainneſs and miniſterial freedom, would now be called the moſt ſlanderous invective and unpardonable abuſe. Inſtead, therefore, of taking upon me to ſay who are chiefly to be blamed as the criminal cauſes of it, I ſhall only affirm and lament the me-

* Matt. v. 16.

lancholy effect, that we have in many places of this church a deſpiſed, forſaken, uſeleſs miniſtry; that many of the people have gone from mountain to mountain, and forgotten their reſting place, while a ſtill greater number is faſt aſleep in ignorance, ſecurity, and ſloth. Where is that union, that mutual eſteem and affection, which once ſubſiſted between miniſters and their people. It muſt be acknowledged, that their influence and authority is now in a great meaſure loſt, and therefore I may ſafely conclude that their uſefulneſs is gone. That the fault is all on one ſide, is neither a modeſt nor a probable ſuppoſition. Should we throw the blame off ourſelves, what a terrible load muſt we thereby lay upon others? We muſt ſuppoſe and ſay, that under a blameleſs miniſtry, under the beſt and pureſt of inſtruction, one part of the nation is ſunk in brutality and ſloth, and the other rent in pieces by diviſion, and religion loſt in the fury of contending parties.

We may ſay ſo, my brethren, and ſome do ſay what amounts to the ſame thing, but it is not credible. I do therefore, in the moſt earneſt manner beſeech every miniſter in this audience, ſeriouſly to think, how far he hath given juſt cauſe to his people to deſpiſe his perſon, or deſert his miniſtrations. Let us not ſo inſiſt upon the ignorance, prejudices, and weakneſs of the giddy multitude, as if a failure on our part was impoſſible. We may be ſometimes blamed in the wrong place; but we have, perhaps, as much reſpect in general, as we really deſerve. Do not think it is ſufficient that you are free from groſs crimes, ſuch as blaſphemy, riot, and unclean luſt. Bleſſed be God, nothing of this kind would yet be ſuffered among us without cenſure. But there are many other things, which, either ſeparately or together, render a miniſter juſtly contemptible, on which no law, either civil or eccleſiaſtic can lay hold. If one ſet apart to the ſervice of Chriſt in the goſpel, manifeſtly ſhows his duty to be a burden, and does no more work than is barely ſufficient to ſcreen him from cenſure; if he reckons it a piece of improvement how ſeldom or how ſhort he can preach, and makes his boaſt how many omiſſions he has brought a patient and an injured people to endure without complaint; while, at the ſame

time, he cannot ſpeak with temper of thoſe who are willing to do more than himſelf; however impoſſible it may be to aſcertain his faults by a libel, he juſtly merits the deteſtation of every faithful miniſter, and every real Chriſtian.

The things here in view, though they are eaſily ſeen, are difficult to deſcribe; and, therefore, I ſhall not attempt to be more particular. But I cannot forbear warning you againſt, and pointing out the evil of two pieces of diſhoneſty, which may poſſibly be found united to gravity and decency in other reſpects. One of them is common in our neighbor kingdom, and may poſſibly have taken place among us, though I cannot affirm it. The other, I am certain, hath many times taken place in the church of Scotland. The firſt is a miniſter's ſubſcribing articles of doctrine, which he does not believe. This is ſo direct, a violation of ſincerity, that it is aſtoniſhing to think, how men can ſet their minds at eaſe in the proſpect, or keep them in peace after the deliberate commiſſion of it. The very excuſes and evaſions, that are offered in defence of it, are a diſgrace to reaſon as well as a ſcandal to religion. What ſucceſs can be expected from that man's miniſtry, who begins it with an act of ſuch complicated guilt. How can he take upon him to reprove others for ſin, or to train them up in virtue and true goodneſs, while himſelf is chargeable with direct, premeditated, and perpetual perjury. I know nothing ſo nearly reſembling it, as thoſe caſes in trade, in which men make falſe entries, and at once ſcreen and aggravate their fraud, by ſwearing, or cauſing others to ſwear contrary to truth. This is juſtly reputed ſcandalous even in the world, and yet I know no circumſtance in which they differ, that does not tend to ſhow it to be leſs criminal than the other. We are not yet ſo much hardened in this ſin as many in our neighbor church, for I have never found any among us ſo bold as to profeſs and defend it. But, if no ſuch thing is at all admitted among us, Why is there ſo heavy a ſuſpicion of it? Why do ſo many complain, that the great and operative doctrines of the goſpel are withdrawn, and an unſubſtantial theory of virtue ſubſtituted in their place? Or why are not ſuch

complaints put to ſilence, ſince it may be ſo eaſily done? Appearances are certainly ſuch as will warrant me in mentioning it upon this occaſion: and I have particularly choſen to introduce it upon this ſubject, that I may attack it not as an error, but as a fraud; not as a miſtake in judgment, but an inſtance of groſs diſhoneſty and inſincerity of heart. Suppoſing, therefore, that there may poſſibly be truth in the charge againſt ſome of us, I muſt beg every miniſter, but eſpecially thoſe young perſons who have an eye to that ſacred office to remember, that God will not be mocked, though the world may be deceived. In his ſight, no gravity of deportment, no pretence to freedom of enquiry, a thing excellent in itſelf, no regular exerciſe of the right of private judgment will warrant or excuſe ſuch a lie for gain, as ſolemnly to ſubſcribe what they do not believe.

The other particular I propoſed to mention is the ſolemn atteſtation of men's characters, not only in general, but for particular qualities, without any ſatisfying knowledge whether the thing affirmed is true or falſe. This hath been often done in the church of Scotland, not by particular perſons, with whom we might renounce relation, but by conſent of many, gravely and deliberately in conſtituted courts. Can we avoid making the following obvious but melancholy reflection, How great is the blindneſs of men to thoſe ſins which are introduced by degrees and countenanced by prevailing faſhion? Should we be told by an hiſtorian of credit, that, in one of the dark and corrupt ages of popery, it was common for a body of miniſters, when deſired, to give a ſigned atteſtation to particular perſons, that they were ſtrict obſervers of the ſabbath, and worſhipped God regularly in their families, while the perſons atteſting knew nothing of the matter, and, in fact, with regard to ſome of them, it was abſolutely falſe. Would there be a diſſenting voice in affirming, that ſuch men muſt have been loſt to all ſenſe of integrity, and utterly unworthy of regard. What ſhall we ſay, if the ſame thing is done among us every day, and defended by no better argument than the judgment of charity, which be-

lieveth all things. Charity teaches us to believe no ill of another without ſatisfying evidence, and forbids us to ſpread it, although it be true, without apparent neceſſity; But will charity either juſtify or excuſe us, in ſolemnly affirming a poſitive fact, the exiſtence of which is uncertain in itſelf, and to us unknown. I do not take upon me to ſay, that all are bad men who are guilty, by act or conſent, of this practice, becauſe I do not know how far the plea of ignorance or miſtake may go; but this may be ſafely ſaid that they do in a public capacity, what, if they were to do in a private capacity between man and man, would render them contemptible, or infamous, or both.

Theſe two particulars have often brought reproach upon the church of Scotland, to which it is very difficult to make a proper reply. Would to God the occaſion given for it were wholly taken away. In the mean time, every one who has a juſt regard to the glory of God, or the ſucceſs of his own work, will endeavor to maintain ſuch an uniformity of character, as will bear that examination, to which it ought in juſtice, and muſt of neceſſity be expoſed.

In the laſt place, I muſt beg leave to ſpeak a few words to the people in general, on the ſubject of this diſcourſe. You may learn, my brethren, from the preceding diſcourſe, by what rule you ought to judge, in all religious controverſies, where a determination is neceſſary. Try all principles by their effects, and every perſon's pretences by his conduct. Examine, as far as you have proper evidence, who have real and vital religion moſt at heart, and what means do effectually promote it. Believe not every profeſſion, but ſee which is moſt conſiſtent in all its parts. Have patience, in difficult caſes, till the tree have time to bring its fruits to maturity. Time will often write a clear and legible character, on what was very dark and dubious at firſt.

It is probable ſome will be ready to ſay, there is no ſmall doubtfulneſs in this rule itſelf. There may be found good men of many different parties, how then ſhall we judge between them? I anſwer, wherever there is true

religion, theſe perſons are to be conſidered as the ſervants of God, and his grace in them is to be confeſſed without reluctance, and adored with thankfulneſs. There will, nevertheleſs, be ſtill ſufficient means to diſtinguiſh between one profeſſion and another, which hath the greateſt influence in making men truly good. There may be, here and there, a good man under very great diſadvantages. This may ſerve to keep us from a bigotted narrowneſs of mind, and uncharitable condemnation of others. But it will never occaſion, in any prudent perſon, a departure from theſe principles, and that diſpenſation of ordinances, which he ſees to be beſt for building him up in holineſs and comfort, through faith unto ſalvation. The truth is, one great deſign of this diſcourſe was to teach men to diſtinguiſh between the upright and the worthleſs of all ſects. Turn your zeal from parties to perſons. Do not reproach or oppoſe men merely becauſe they are of this or the other perſuaſion. But, wherever there is a wicked or a worldly man in the office of a miniſter, avoid the wolf in ſheep's cloathing for your own ſake, and, if poſſible, drag off his diſguiſe, that others may not be his prey. What doth it ſignify what party a man is of, if the foundations are deſtroyed, and truth and holineſs, theſe inſeparable companions, are trampled under foot. When ſhall the time come, when the ſincere lovers of Chriſt, of every denomination, ſhall join together in oppoſition to his open enemies and treacherous friends. There is a wonderful, though a natural union, among all worldly men, againſt the ſpirit and power of true religion wherever it appears. I am ſorry to add, that this is one of the inſtances in which the children of this world are wiſer in their generation than the children of light. Many will not meet together on earth for the worſhip of God, who ſhall have but one temple at laſt, where all from the eaſt and from the weſt, from the north and from the ſouth, ſhall meet, and join in their Creator and Redeemer's praiſe. The terms of admiſſion into, and of excluſion from this happy dwelling, are recorded in the following remarkable terms, with which I ſhall conclude this diſcourſe, as indeed they are the ſum of all that has

been ſaid in it, "And there ſhall in no wiſe enter into it "any thing that defileth, neither whatſoever worketh abo- "mination, or maketh a lie, but they which are written "in the Lamb's book of life."*

* Rev. xxi. 27.

The CHARGE of SEDITION and FACTION againſt good MEN, eſpecially faithful MINISTERS, conſidered and accounted for.

A

SERMON,

Preached in the Abbey Church of Paisley, on Thursday, September 7th, 1758, at the Ordination of Mr. ARCHIBALD DAVIDSON, *as one of the Ministers of that Church. To which is subjoined, the charge to the Minister, and the Exhortation to the People. Published at the desire of those who heard it.*

ACTS xvii. 6. laſt clauſe.

These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.

MY BRETHREN,

YOU have had, of late, frequent opportunities of hearing diſcourſes on the miniſterial character and office. Theſe ſubjects, indeed, have, on occaſions of this and a ſimilar nature, been ſo often and ſo well handled, that it is hard to ſay any thing on them, which ſhall not be either bare repetition, or an alteration very much for the worſe. I have therefore made choice at this time of a ſubject ſomewhat different, but the uſefulneſs of which, both to miniſters and people may be eaſily diſcerned.

A great part of the ſacred volume conſiſts of hiſtory. And, as the knowledge of paſt events, and the hiſtory of mankind in general, is an improving ſtudy; ſo there is no object of ſtudy more pleaſant or more profitable, than that extenſive view of the great plan of Providence which

is exhibited to us in the word of God. There we have accéſs to obſerve the power, the wiſdom, and the grace of the various revelations of the divine will, given in ſucceſſive ages, their correſpondence one to another, and how well each is ſuited to the ſeaſon, and other circumſtances of its diſcovery. Above all, it is uſeful and delightful to obſerve, the perfect union and harmony of the whole, and the ſeveral ſtriking and diſtinguiſhing characters that are to be found on all the works of the one, eternal and unchangeable God.

This uniformity is in nothing more remarkable, than in the ſufferings of good men, and their cauſes. True religion being the ſame in ſubſtance in every age, we may expect to find a very ſtrong likeneſs in all the real ſervants of God, however diſtant the periods in which they make their appearance. A conformity of ſtate alſo may be expected, as well as a ſimilarity of character. They have the ſame end in view, they tread in the ſame path, and therefore muſt meet with reſiſtance from the ſame enemies. There was from the beginning, and there will be to the end of the world, a ſtrife and conflict between the righteous and the wicked, between "the ſeed of the "woman, and the ſeed of the ſerpent." And, in particular, it is natural to ſuppoſe, that ſlander and calumny will be always one of the weapons uſed by the enemies of the truth. We have no reaſon then to be ſurpriſed, that every good man ſhould have occaſion to ſay with the Pſalmiſt David, and with a greater than he, the Son of David, "They laid to my charge things that I knew not."

This was the caſe with the apoſtle Paul and his companion, in the paſſage of hiſtory of which my text is a part. But the nature of the accuſation here brought againſt them ſeems to be ſingular, and to merit particular attention. They were the ſervants and the miniſters of the Prince of peace. Their office was to preach and publiſh the goſpel of peace. Their doctrine was full of meekneſs and love. They diſcovered the love of God to men; and, after the example of their maſter, they charged men to love one another. They were mean in their outward appearance, and neither poſſeſſed, nor claimed

any earthly dominion. In one word, they had nothing about them that one would think could give jealouſy to the civil power, that could ſeem formidable or dangerous to any character or claſs of men. Yet here they are charged as ſeditious, as diſturbers to the public peace, as enemies to the government. "Theſe that have turned "the world upſide down are come hither alſo.——Theſe "all do contrary to the decrees of Cæſar, ſaying, That "there is another king, one Jeſus." What ſort of an accuſation is this? not only falſe but improbable. Does not the arch-enemy, the accuſer of the brethren, ſeem to have failed in his uſual ſkill? Is there the leaſt proſpect of ſucceſs in ſo groundleſs a charge?

But what ſhall we ſay, if, upon an accurate examination it be found, that the ſame charge hath been brought againſt the ſervants of God in every age? That none hath been advanced with greater boldneſs, and none with greater ſucceſs? Nay, perhaps, that it is the ſingle ſtanding charge, from which their enemies have never departed ſince the beginning of the world, and which, of all others, hath been moſt readily and moſt univerſally believed. In other inſtances, the reproaches thrown upon the children of God have been oppoſite, and mutually deſtructive of each other. Chriſt himſelf, when his zeal in his Father's buſineſs made him forget to eat bread, was ſaid to be beſide himſelf, and mad. At other times he was called a cunning deceiver and maſter of the curious arts. But in this, his enemies, and thoſe of his people, have never varied. And their ſucceſs has been equal to their malice. They crucified him as an enemy to Cæſar, with the title of uſurpation written over him; and they have compelled all his diſciples after him, to bear his croſs, and to groan under the weight of the ſame unjuſt and ſlanderous charge.

There are few ſubjects more worthy of the ſerious attention of thoſe who firmly believe the word of God. None which will afford greater occaſion to adore the myſterious depth of divine Providence, or furniſh more inſtructive leſſons to ſuch as deſire to hold on with ſteadineſs in the paths of true religion. Above all, this ſubject may be

uſeful to miniſters of the goſpel. It will contribute to aſcertain the character which they ought to bear; to direct them in their duty; to prepare them for, and fortify them againſt the trials which it is impoſſible they can avoid.

In diſcourſing further upon this ſubject it is propoſed, through the aſſiſtance of divine grace,

I. By a ſhort hiſtorical deduction, chiefly from the holy Scriptures, to ſhew, That the character of ſeditious, troubleſome, and diſorderly, hath been conſtantly given by wicked men to the ſervants of God.

II. To enquire, and endeavor to point out, what it is in true religion that gives occaſion to this charge, and makes the world prone to believe it.

In the laſt place, To make ſome practical improvement of what may be ſaid.

I return to the firſt of theſe, viz.

I. By a ſhort hiſtorical deduction, to ſhew, That the character of ſeditious, troubleſome, and diſorderly, hath been conſtantly given by wicked men to the ſervants of God.——It would not be difficult to point out ſomething of this ſpirit prevailing in the world, from the life of almoſt every good man, whoſe name ſtands upon record, however ſhort and general the account be, that is given of many of them in Scripture. But, as much of what might properly enough fall under this head, will be neceſſary in the illuſtration of the ſecond; to prevent confuſion and repetition, I ſhall content myſelf with ſome leading inſtances, in very different ages, from the earlieſt to the lateſt times.

The firſt I ſhall mention is, a paſſage as extraordinary in its nature, and as ſingular in its circumſtances, as any that hiſtory affords. It is the meeting of Ahab and Elijah, in the time of a great famine in the land of Iſrael. Ahab, that profane prince, had by his apoſtacy and idolatry, brought down the judgment of a righteous God, both on his kingdom and on his houſe. We

are told, "That he did more to provoke the Lord God of "Iſrael to anger, than all the kings of Iſrael that were "before him."* He had perſecuted the worſhippers of the true God with unrelenting violence; and, as it was natural to expect, he hated with uncommon rancor, and diſtinguiſhed by uncommon ſeverity, all the prophets who continued ſtedfaſt in the cauſe of truth. As many of them as he could lay hold of, he had put to death. He had hunted for Elijah, not only through all the kingdom of Iſrael, but through the neighboring nations, as we find related by Obadiah his principal ſervant, "As the Lord thy "God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom whither my "lord hath not ſent to ſeek thee: and when they ſaid, "He is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and "nation that they found thee not."† After all this ſeverity on his part, when Elijah, by the command of God went out to meet him, ſee the form of his ſalutation; "And "it came to paſs, when Ahab ſaw Elijah, that Ahab ſaid "unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Iſrael?"‡ To this the prophet makes the following ſtrong and juſt reply, "I have not troubled Iſrael; but thou and thy father's "houſe, have troubled Iſrael, in that thou haſt forſaken the "commandments of the Lord; and thou haſt followed "Baalim."

Another inſtance ſimilar to the former may be found in Jehoſhaphat and Ahab's conſultation before going out to battle. "And Jehoſhaphat ſaid, Is there not here a prophet "of the Lord beſides, that we may enquire of him? And "the king of Iſrael ſaid unto Jehoſhaphat, There is yet one "man (Micaiah the ſon of Imlah) by whom we may en-"quire of the Lord; but I hate him, for he doth not pro-"pheſy good concerning me, but evil."‖ Here, you ſee, Micaiah was the object of hatred and averſion, becauſe he denounced the judgment of God againſt the king's wickedneſs. That vengeance which he himſelf not only merited but ſolicited by his crimes, was attributed to malice in the prophet.

* 1 Kings xvi. 33. † 1 Kings xviii. 10. ‡ Ibid. ver. 17.

‖ 1 Kings xxii. 7, 8.

See an inſtance of a general accuſation of this kind againſt all the worſhippers of the true God, by Haman in the book of Eſther. "And Haman ſaid unto king Aha-"ſuerus, There is a certain people ſcattered abroad, and "diſperſed among the people in all the provinces of thy "kingdom, and their laws are diverſe from all people, nei-"ther keep they the king's laws; therefore it is not for "the king's profit to ſuffer them."*

The prophet Jeremiah met with the ſame treatment at different times. Neither prince, nor prieſts, nor prophets, were able to bear without reſentment, the threatenings which he denounced in the name of God. "Now it came "to paſs, when Jeremiah had made an end of ſpeaking "all that the Lord had commanded him to ſpeak unto all "the people, that the prieſts and the prophets, and all the "people took him, ſaying, Thou ſhalt ſurely die. Why "haſt thou propheſied in the name of the Lord, ſaying, "This houſe ſhall be like Shiloh, and this city ſhall be de-"ſolate without an inhabitant, and all the people were "gathered againſt Jeremiah in the houſe of the Lord.†— "Then ſpake the prieſts and the prophets unto the princes "and to all the people, ſaying, This man is worthy to "die, for he hath propheſied againſt this city, as you have "heard with your ears."‡ We find him afterwards ex-preſsly accuſed of treachery on the ſame account. "And "when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the "ward was there, whoſe name was Irijah, the ſon of She-"lemiah, the ſon of Hananiah, and he took Jeremiah the "prophet, ſaying, Thou falleſt away to the Chaldeans."‖

The prophet Amos is another inſtance, preciſely paral-lel to the laſt. Becauſe of his fidelity to God, he was in-vidiouſly repreſented as an enemy to the king. "Then "Amaziah the prieſt of Beth-el ſent to Jeroboam king of "Iſrael, ſaying, Amos hath conſpired againſt thee in the "midſt of the houſe of Iſrael: the land is not able to bear "all his words."*

* Eſther iii. 8. † Jer. xxvi. 8, 9. ‡ Ibid. ver. 11.

‖ Jer. xxxvii. 13. See alſo chap. xxxviii. 4. * Amos vii. 10.

Our bleſſed Lord and Saviour fell under the ſame accuſation. However plain and artleſs his carriage, he is called a deceiver of the people. "There was much murmur-"ing among the people concerning him, for ſome ſaid, "he is a good man; others ſaid, Nay, but he deceiveth "the people."* His enemies endeavored to embroil him with the civil government by this inſidious queſtion, "Is "it lawful to give tribute to Cæſar, or not?" And that which brought him at laſt to the croſs was the ſame pretended crime. "And from thenceforth Pilate ſought to "releaſe him: but the Jews cried out, ſaying, If thou let "this man go, thou art not Cæſar's friend: whoſoever "maketh himſelf a king, ſpeaketh againſt Cæſar."†

I ſhall cloſe this view of the Scripture hiſtory, with the paſſage of which my text is a part. The whole crime of the apoſtle Paul, and his companion, was preaching the doctrine of the croſs of Chriſt, his great and darling theme. We are told, he "opened" and "alledged, that Chriſt muſt "needs have ſuffered, and riſen again from the dead." Then the Jews, to whom this doctrine always was a ſtumbling-block, were "moved with envy," and endeavored to inflame the reſentment of the idolatrous multitude: they took for their aſſociates the moſt wicked and profligate, "Certain lewd fellows of the baſer ſort:" They "ſet all "the city in an uproar:" And as, no doubt, the friends of Paul and Silas would endeavor to protect them from the injurious aſſault, their enemies very gravely charge them as the authors of the confuſion, both there and elſewhere, "They that have turned the world upſide down, "are come hither alſo."

Having produced theſe inſtances from the holy Scriptures, which are liable to no exception, I ſhall ſay but little on the ſubſequent periods of the church. Only in general, the ſame ſpirit will be found to have prevailed in every age. Whoever will take the pains to look into the hiſtory of the church before the reformation, cannot fail to obſerve, that when any one, either among the clergy or laity, was bold enough to reprove the errors in doctrine,

* John vii. 12. † John xix. 12.

or the ambition, luxury, and worldly lives of his cotemporaries, he was immediately branded as a factious and diſorderly perſon, and often ſeverely puniſhed as an enemy to the peace of the church.

That this was the caſe with the firſt reformers, both at home and abroad, is too well known to need any proof. And we have had ſtill more recent examples of it in both parts of the united kingdom. The noble ſtruggle which many in England made, about an hundred years ago, for their liberties ſacred and civil, ſtill bears the name of the grand rebellion. And it is remarkable, that, however juſt a title they had to ſtand up for their rights as men and Chriſtians, yet their doing ſo at that time, was in a great meaſure owing to the fury and violence of their enemies, who were, in every reſpect, the aggreſſors. A very judicious hiſtorian ſays on this ſubject, "That which, "upon the whole, was the great cauſe of the parliament's "ſtrength and the king's ruin, was, that the debauched "rabble through the land, took all that were called Puri-"tans for their enemies; ſo that if a man did but pray in "his family, or were but heard repeat a ſermon, or ſing a "pſalm, they preſently cried out, Rebels, roundheads, and "all their money and goods that were portable, proved "guilty, how innocent ſoever they were themſelves. "This it was that filled the armies and garriſons of the "parliament with ſober pious men. Thouſands had no "mind to meddle with the wars, but greatly deſired to live "peaceably at home, when the rage of ſoldiers and drunk-"ards would not ſuffer them."*

And in Scotland, after the reſtoration, though there was no ſtruggle for civil liberty, all who choſe to obey God rather than man, either in the ſubſtance or circumſtances of religious duties, were charged with treaſon, and ſuffered as rebels. They were expelled from the church; yet cenſured as ſchiſmatics. They were harraſſed, fined and impriſoned, when living in peace, without any fault but "concerning the law of their God;" and yet complained of as troubleſome. They were baniſhed, excommunica-

* Calamy's Life of Baxter, Chap. IV.

ted, and denied the common benefits of life; and yet, when the extreme rigor of their oppreſſors compelled them to take up arms in ſelf-defence, they were condemned in form of law for reſiſting that government which had denied them its protection.

I forbear to add any more particular examples; but from the deduction above given, it will plainly appear, that worldly men have been always diſpoſed, firſt to oppreſs the children of God, and then to complain of injury from them, that by ſlander they might vindicate their oppreſſion. Their ſlander too, hath ſtill run in the ſame ſtrain; troublers of Iſrael, deceivers of the people, enemies to Cæſar, and turners of the world upſide down, have been the opprobrious titles generally given to the moſt upright and moſt faithful men, in every age and country.

We proceed now,

II. In the ſecond place, To enquire, what it is in true religion that gives occaſion to this charge, and makes the world prone to believe it.

That there muſt be ſomething of this kind is very evident. So uniform an effect, could not take place without an adequate cauſe. And, to a ſerious and attentive obſerver, I am perſuaded it is not difficult to diſcern. The general cauſe of this effect is, that, in an equivocal ſenſe, the charge is juſt. True religion does, indeed, give trouble and uneaſineſs to wicked men, while they continue ſuch; and it cannot be ſuppoſed, but they will deeply reſent it. In order to illuſtrate this a little more fully, I beg your attention to the three following obſervations.

1. The example of the ſervants of God, is a continual and ſenſible reproach, to the contrary conduct of the men of the world. Nothing can preſerve peace to any man, but ſome meaſure of ſelf-ſatisfaction. As a deceived heart turns the wicked aſide, ſo the continuance of ſelf-deceit is neceſſary to his taſting thoſe pleaſures of ſin in which his miſtaken happineſs is placed. To reproach his conduct, therefore, is to diſturb his dream, and to wound his peace. And as pride, however finely diſguiſed, has the dominion in every unrenewed heart, how offenſive muſt every ſpe-

cies of reproof be, to men of this character? Now, is not the example of every good man, a ſevere and ſenſible, though ſilent, reproof to the wicked? With whatever ſpecious arguments men may ſometimes plead for ſin, with whatever falſe pretences they may often excuſe and palliate it to their own minds, when it is brought into one view with true religion, it is not able to bear the compariſon. The example of good men to the wicked is, like the ſun upon a weak eye, diſtreſſing and painful. It is excellent in itſelf, but it is offenſive to them. If I may ſpeak ſo, it flaſhes light upon the conſcience, rouſes it from a ſtate of inſenſible ſecurity, points its arrows, and ſharpens its ſting. What elſe was it that produced the firſt act of violence that ſtands upon record, the murder of Abel by his brother Cain? Of this the apoſtle John ſpeaks in the following terms, "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, "and ſlew his brother: and wherefore ſlew he him? "Becauſe his own works were evil, and his brother's "righteous."

And, as every worldly man's own conſcience is thus made troubleſome to him by the example of the children of God: ſo it tends to ſet ſinners at variance with one another, and expoſes the conduct of each to the cenſure of the reſt. Sin, however univerſally practiſed, is yet generally ſhameful. Conſcience though bribed, and comparatively blind in a man's own caſe, is often juſt and impartial, at leaſt under far leſs bias, in the caſe of others. It is in this way, and in this way alone, that the public honor and credit of religion is preſerved, amidſt ſo great a majority who are enemies to it in their hearts. Muſt not then, the example of a ſtrict and conſcientious perſon, ſet in the ſtrongeſt light the faults of thoſe who act a contrary part, ſo often as they happen to fall under obſervation together. Nay, does it not open the eyes of the world upon many leſſer blemiſhes which would otherways eſcape its notice? The degree of ſhame that attends any practice, is always in proportion to the ſenſe which the bulk of mankind have of the evil of it. And this ſenſe cannot, by any means, be more ſtrengthened, than by an example of what is good; as deformity never appears ſo ſhocking as when

compared with perfect beauty. Thus, a truly pious man is, by every inſtance of his viſible conduct, expoſing to reproach ſome one or other, and by conſequence provoking their reſentment.

It is for this reaſon that men diſcover ſuch a proneneſs to diſparage every profeſſion of piety ſuperior to their own. How common is it to aſcribe every ſuch appearance to weakneſs or hypocriſy. In the generality of wicked men this is not ſo properly malice as ſelf-defence. If they ſhould allow the excellence of ſuch a character, it would be condemning themſelves out of their own mouths. Their inward reflection, in all probability, is perfectly ſimilar to that of the Phariſees, when Chriſt aſked them, Whether the baptiſm of John was from heaven, or of men? "They "reaſoned with themſelves, ſaying, If we ſhall ſay from "heaven, he will ſay unto us, Why did ye not then be-"lieve him?" In the ſame manner, ſhould any confeſs the excellence of a conduct oppoſite to their own, it would be impoſſible to avoid ſaying to them, Why do ye then ſo ſin againſt light?

Every one will ſee, that this muſt neceſſarily hold moſt ſtrongly in the caſe of thoſe whoſe office, or whoſe work, is of a public nature. They are like a city ſet on an hill. As their character is moſt conſpicuous, it is, by neceſſary conſequence, moſt uſeful to the good, and moſt provoking to the wicked. Faithful miniſters of Chriſt, for inſtance, are the lights of the world, and, by their piety and diligence, are a ſtanding reproach to the world lying in wickedneſs. But, in a particular manner, they muſt be the objects of the hatred and reſentment of thoſe of their own order, who will not follow their ſteps. This is an evident conſequence of the principle above laid down. As their character ſuffers moſt by the compariſon, their paſſions muſt neceſſarily be moſt inflamed. Let a miniſter of Chriſt be ever ſo guarded in his ſpeech, ever ſo inoffenſive in his carriage, ever ſo diſtant in reality from injuring others; if he is more frequent or more affectionate in preaching, if he is more aſſiduous in the duties of his function, this muſt naturally excite the reſentment of the

lazy, ſlothful part of his profeſſion. This of itſelf, is injury enough to thoſe who love their worldly eaſe, and have more pleaſure in the poſſeſſion of their benefice, than the exerciſe of their office. Is this ſurpriſing? Not in the leaſt. His conduct does indeed moleſt their quiet: it either forces them to greater diligence, or holds up their real character to light, and expoſes them to contempt and ſcorn.

In order at once to confirm and illuſtrate this truth, be pleaſed, my brethren, to obſerve, that the force and malignity of envy in defaming of characters, is always in proportion to the nearneſs of the perſon to whom the character belongs. Diſtance, either of time or place, greatly abates, if not wholly extinguiſhes it. Suppoſe the character of a perſon drawn, who lived many ages ago, or even at preſent in a very diſtant country; ſuppoſe him repreſented as eminent in virtue of every kind, as remarkably diligent, as indefatigably active in doing good; there are few who ſhew any diſpoſition to call in queſtion the fact, or impute it to ſiniſter motives. But let the ſame be the apparant character of any man among his contemporaries, and how many are immediately up in arms againſt him? How implicitly do they believe, and with what pleaſure do they ſpread every idle calumny to his prejudice? How is his piety immediately converted into hypocriſy, his zeal into faction and ill nature, his fervor and diligence into affectation and love of popularity; and, in a word, every valuable quality into that vice, by which it is moſt commonly or moſt artfully counterfeited.

That this difference of judgment is entirely owing to the reaſon I have aſſigned, will further appear, if you conſider, that ſo ſoon as a connexion of the ſame nature happens, by any accidental circumſtance to be eſtabliſhed, the ſame invidious reſentment immediately takes place againſt the moſt diſtant characters. What inveterate prejudice do infidels generally ſhow, againſt the characters of the Scripture ſaints, and thoſe of the fathers of the Chriſtian church, becauſe the eſtabliſhment of ſuch characters does neceſſarily and manifeſtly infer the overthrow of the cauſe in which they are embarked. In the mean time, the wiſe

men of the heathen nations are ſuffered to poſſeſs, without contradiction, all the reputation which their countrymen in after-ages have thought fit to beſtow upon them. Nay, ſometimes to ſerve a certain purpoſe, their character is increaſed and magnified beyond all reaſonable bounds. What pains have been taken by thoſe Chriſtians, who patronize the modern inventions and improvements in theology, to undermine the characters of the moſt eminent champions of the ancient faith? What would ſome perſons teach us to believe of Athanaſius and Auguſtine in earlier, Calvin, Luther and Melanćthon in later times? Not that we have not well atteſted evidence of their piety and integrity, but that, being of different ſentiments from their accuſers, the excellence of their character is too good a ſupport to their cauſe.*

2. Another reaſon why the ſervants of God are repreſented as troubleſome is, becauſe they will not, and dare not comply with the ſinful commandments of men. In matters merely civil, good men are the moſt regular citizens and the moſt obedient ſubjećts. But, as they have a Maſter in heaven, no earthly power can conſtrain them

* I take the opportunity here to add, That the principle above laid down, will plainly account for the great and unaſſaulted reputation, which the Monks and retired devotees ſo long enjoyed in popiſh times. It was their reputation, indeed, which upheld for ſo long a period, that immenſe load of idolatrous ſuperſtition, the Romiſh religion; and it was not loſt, till they were groſly corrupted, and convents were become receptacles of the moſt ſhameful impurity and luſt. Theſe perſons were ſeparated from the world. No frequent, and few near compariſons, could be made between them and others. Nay, their character was voluntary, and peculiar to themſelves, containing no pretence of an obligation upon all others to imitate it; and therefore, they were ſuffered to live unenvied. But if any perſons of piety towards God, and fidelity to their Maſter's cauſe, live in the world, and refuſe to be conformed to it, they muſt expect the ſame treatment that he met with. This he hath told them himſelf, "If the world hate "you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.*——The ſer- "vant is not greater than the Lord. If they have perſecuted me, "they will alſo perſecute you; if they have kept my ſaying, they "will keep yours alſo."†

* John xv. 18. † Verſe 20.

to deny his name or defert his cauſe. The reply of Peter and John to the Jewiſh rulers when they were commanded "Not to ſpeak at all or teach in the name of Jeſus," was in the following terms, "Whether it be right in the "ſight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, "judge ye."* With what invincible conſtancy and reſolution did Shadrach, Meſhach, and Abednego refuſe to bow before Nebuchadnezzar's golden image? The caſe of Daniel was perfectly ſimilar, whom even the king's commandment could not reſtrain from prayer to God.

When good men are unhappily brought into theſe circumſtances, their conduct is an apparent contradiction to authority. How ready are lordly and oppreſſive tyrants to ſtyle it obſtinacy and pride? And when are there wanting ſlaviſh and ſubmiſſive flatterers near every inferior tribunal, to aggravate the crime, and to cry, "If "thou let this man go, thou art not Cæſar's friend?" It is not to be imagined, indeed, but ſuch as are ſtrangers to true religion, muſt be greatly provoked at thoſe who will not comply implicitly with their commands. There is a remarkable paſſage in a letter of Pliny the younger, to the emperor Trajan, which plainly points out the ſentiments entertained by many on this ſubject. He was a man in other matters abundantly humane, and yet hear his own account of his treatment of the Chriſtians when brought to his tribunal. "I aſked them if they were "Chriſtians; if they confeſſed, I aſked them again threat-"ning puniſhment. If they perſiſted, I commanded "them to be executed; for I did not at all doubt but, "whatever their confeſſion was, their ſtubborneſs and in-"flexible obſtinacy ought to be puniſhed."

There is a love of dominion natural to all men, which is under no controul or reſtraint in thoſe who are void of religion. This muſt naturally diſpoſe them to carry on their ſchemes, and to inſiſt on having them univerſally complied with. It frets and provokes them, therefore, to find any who will not be ſubſervient to their pleaſures. A refuſal to obey, on a principle of conſcience, is expreſsly ſetting bounds to their authority, and ſaying, Hi-

* Acts iv. 19.

therto ſhalt thou go, but no further. How few are able to bear this with patience, the hiſtory of the world in every age is one continued proof.

Such refuſals alſo, do always reflect ſome diſhonor upon the meaſures to which they ſtand in oppoſition. Whatever any perſon refuſes to do, he, as far as in him lies, repreſents as wrong and ſinful; and, in ſome reſpects, unworthy or unfit to be done. Thus it comes to be conſidered not only as withdrawing his own allegiance, but as corrupting and ſeducing others. And no doubt, it tends to draw the attention of the world to the diſputed command, and makes ſome, perhaps, ſift and examine what they had before blindly gone into without ſuſpicion. Hence it naturally follows, that whenever ſuch interference happens between human and divine authority, good men muſt be conſidered as diſorderly and troubleſome; and thoſe of them of all others moſt troubleſome, who with the greateſt conſtancy adhere to their duty, or who, with the greateſt honeſty and boldneſs, reſiſt and oppoſe corrupt meaſures.

It is leſs ſurpriſing to find inſtances of this between heathen and Chriſtian, between the profeſſing ſervants and open enemies of the true God. But it is aſtoniſhing to think, how often the ſame thing has happened between Chriſtian and Chriſtian, who ought to have been better acquainted with the rights of conſcience, the meaſures of ſubmiſſion, and the duty of forbearance. Not only all the perſecutions, but many, if not moſt, of the ſchiſms and diviſions that have fallen out in the Chriſtian church, have ariſen from the rigorous impoſitions of uſurped authority. Unjuſt authority is the very eſſence of popery. The church of Rome has expreſsly claimed a power of making laws to bind the conſcience, diſtinct from the laws of God; and ſeverely puniſhes all who call this authority in queſtion. Nor hath this been confined to them: proteſtant churches, though their ſeparation is founded upon the very contrary principle, have yet often in practice acted in the ſame arbitrary manner. They inſiſt upon obedience to all their appointments, however ſinful in the judgment of the ſubject: and, as a good man will not com-

ply in such cases, how often doth it happen, that, after they have expelled him from their society, stript him of his office, and robbed him of his maintenance, they also cast out his name as evil, loudly charge him as seditious and troublesome, and the author of all that confusion which their own tyranny occasions.

3. One other reason why the servants of God are accused as troublesome, is, because they are, in many instances, obliged, to bear testimony against the sins of others, and openly to reprove them. Reproof is plainly, of all others, the greatest offence and provocation of the proud, and draws down their heaviest resentment: and yet it is often unavoidable. There are some cases in which every Christian without exception, must feel the constraint of this divine law. "Thou shalt in any wise re-"buke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him."* Some sins are so flagrant in their nature that, even to witness them with silence, would imply some participation of the guilt. In such cases it is the glory of the poorest and meanest servant of God, to resent the dishonor that is done to his name, and reprove the most exalted sinner.

But this duty, and the odium arising from it, falls most frequently to the share of the prophets and ministers of God, who have received a commission to speak in his name and to plead his cause. The faithful discharge of their duty, includes in it plainness and boldness in reproving sin of every kind. They must assert and maintain the truth, and point out the errors opposite to it, with all their guilty fruits, and all their dreadful consequences. How offensive this to human pride? It must certainly either convince or provoke, reform or inflame. When righteous Lot says, in the mildest terms, to the lustful Sodomites, "I pray you "brethren, do not so wickedly," how fierce is the answer? "And they said, stand back. And they said again, This "one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a "judge."†

How many martyrs to truth have there been since the world began? Without mentioning those in the Old Testa-

* Lev. xix. 17. † Gen. xix. 9.

ment, you see John the baptist lost his life by reproving the incestuous adultery of Herod and Herodias. Our blessed Saviour gives the following account of the hatred of the world to him, and the contrary reception it gave to his temporising brethren, "The world cannot hate you; "but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works "thereof are evil." By consulting the history of the gospel you will find, that what gave rise to the conspiracy of the Scribes and Pharisees against him, was his dragging off the mask under which they lay concealed, and discovering the errors of their doctrine, and the licentiousness of their practice. When they "perceived that he spake "against them,—they took counsel against him to put "him to death;" and accomplished it so soon as they could do it with safety. But there cannot be a better example, or indeed, a more lively and well drawn picture of the effect of plain and just reproof, than in the case of Stephen, when pleading his cause before the Jewish rulers. "Ye stiff-"necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do al-"ways resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do "ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers per-"secuted? And they have slain them which shewed before "of the coming of the just One; of whom you have been "now the betrayers and murderers.—When they heard "these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnash-"ed on him with their teeth."* It is plainly for this reason that the apostles, in their prayers for assistance, do almost constantly ask, that they may be endued with a proper degree of boldness and resolution, "And now, Lord, be-"hold their threatenings; and grant unto thy servants "that with all boldness they may speak thy word."† Many other prayers are to be found in the apostlic writings which run in the same strain.‡

It is very natural for every one at this distance, to imagine, that he could have been in no danger of making such an obstinate resistance to the truth, or persecuting, with such implacable enmity, those who espoused it. But, my brethren, all worldly men, in every age, have still the

* Acts vii. 51, 52, 54. † Acts iv. 29. ‡ See Eph. vi. 19. 2 Thess. iii. 2.

ſame abhorrence of the faithful ſervants of God; the ſame impatience of reproof, when it touches themſelves. Our Saviour draws their character with great beauty, in ſpeaking to the Phariſees; "Wo unto you Scribes and Phari-"ſees, hypocrites, becauſe ye build the tombs of the pro-"phets, and garniſh the ſepulchres of the righteous; and "ſay, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would "not have been partakers with them in the blood of the "prophets. Wherefore ye be witneſſes unto yourſelves, "that ye are the children of them which killed the pro-"phets."* It is very delicately hinted in this laſt verſe, that they were of the ſame nature, that they grew, as it were, upon the ſame ſtock, and therefore it might be expected that they would bring forth the ſame fruit. I cannot but here mention a remark of a very eminent writer upon this paſſage; "That all nations partake much of this diſ-"poſition of the Jews, to honor the dead ſaints, and perſe-"cute the living."†

I have taken notice above, that in every period of the church, the moſt faithful of the ſervants and miniſters of God, have, in fact, been counted troubleſome by corrupt and worldly men. The ſame paſſages of hiſtory conſtantly ſhew, that this has ariſen chiefly from their attempts to ſtem the tide of prevailing vice; from their boldneſs and faithfulneſs in reproving faſhionable crimes. In the twelfth century, Arnulphus, a devout man, and excellent preacher, ſpeaks thus to the clergy: "I know that you "ſeek my life, and will ſhortly kill me: But why? I "I ſpeak the truth to you, I reprehend your pride and "haughtineſs, avarice and luxury: therefore I pleaſe you "not."‡ And in the fourteenth century, an ancient writer ſpeaks of the court of Rome in the following terms: "For what can you conceive will happen where "virtue was long ago extinct and buried? There ſurely "truth is the higheſt crime, and of itſelf ſufficient to pro-"cure the hatred of many. For how can we expect but "that ſhould happen, where a true word cannot be ſpoken

* Matt. xxiii. 29, 30, 31. † Tillotſon.

‡ Whitby's App. to his book on Hoſt-worſhip.

" without a great reproach, where the worſt of men are " promoted,—where ſimplicity is eſteemed madneſs,— " where good men are rendered ridiculous, inſomuch that " now ſcarce any of them doth appear to be laughed at. " Theſe few things truth itſelf hath dared to ſpeak, whence " you may gather what you are to think of many others, " which fear doth force me to conceal."* It is unneceſſary to cite many paſſages to this purpoſe; I ſhall therefore conclude this head with the following juſt reflection of the pious, diligent, and catholic Mr. Baxter; " I ſee there " is no help for it, but we muſt offend wicked men. It " is impoſſible to avoid it, but either by our ſilence or " their patience. Silent we cannot be, becauſe the word " of God commands us to ſpeak; and patient they can- " not be, becauſe ſin has the dominion in their hearts."

We now proceed, in the laſt place, to make ſome practical improvement of what has been ſaid. And,

In the firſt place, You may learn from what has been ſaid upon this ſubject, the juſt and proper anſwer to an objection againſt the goſpel, much inſiſted on by its enemies, viz. That it has introduced perſecution for conſcience ſake, with which the world was in a great meaſure unacquainted before. There are few ſubjects, on which infidels enlarge with greater pleaſure, than the cruel hatred and animoſity that has prevailed; the bloody wars that have been carried on; nay, the ſavage and inhuman maſſacres that have been perpetrated on a religious account, ſince the publication of the goſpel. I think this objection is but ſeldom anſwered as it might be. It is uſually indeed, and juſtly obſerved, that whatever may have been done by thoſe profeſſing the goſpel, there is no countenance given in it to ſuch a ſpirit and practice. But the objection is not wholly removed, while infidels are allowed ſtill to contend, as if it ſerved their own cauſe, that perſecution has been its conſtant attendant and inſeparable effect. We ought therefore, to wreſt this argument out of their hands, and firſt to produce this fact as an accompliſhment

* Petrarch's Ep.

of our Saviour's prediction; "Think not that I am come "to ſend peace on earth: I came not to ſend peace, but "a ſword. For I am come to ſet a man at variance "againſt his father, and the daughter againſt her mother, "and the daughter-in-law againſt her mother-in-law. "And a man's foes ſhall be they of his own houſhold."*

Having gone thus far, we have reaſon to contend that the diſciples of Chriſt have always ſuffered, and never inflicted the injury, though they have often been obliged to bear the blame. The multitude of heathen religions, though not always, yet did generally agree together: and well they might, for they were all from the ſame author. None of them, however, could agree with the goſpel: for this plain reaſon, that "no lie is of the truth." But from what quarter did the violence proceed? Did not the dreadful perſecutions againſt the Chriſtians, in the three firſt centuries, proceed from the heathens? Did the Chriſtians commit any other crime againſt them, than pointing out the ſin and danger of their idolatrous worſhip, and immoral practices? Was not this alone ſufficient to raiſe a cry againſt them, as turning the world upſide down? And in all the ſubſequent perſecutions among profeſſing Chriſtians, was it any thing elſe than the proud, violent, and worldly ſpirit of thoſe who made a gain of godlineſs, oppreſſing the few real believers of every denomination? There is an antichriſtian ſpirit in every church that ſhews itſelf in perſecution, in a greater or leſſer degree. But there can be nothing more unjuſt, than to attribute the perſecution of Chriſt's diſciples by his enemies and theirs, to the ſpirit of his religion.

Is it then boldly affirmed by ſome, that the Chriſtian is the only religion in the world that leads to perſecution? I anſwer, on the contrary, It is the only religion that has ſuffered perſecution from all its numerous enemies: and at the ſame time, it is the only religion in the world that requires, and points out the obligation, of mutual forbearance, and makes the juſt and proper diviſion between the things that are Cæſar's, and the things that are God's.

* Matt. x. 34, 35, 36.

That it is often blamed as perſecuting others, is a proof and illuſtration of this truth. For all is of a piece, and the falſe accuſation ariſes from the ſource which I have opened up above, and confirmed by examples produced from hiſtory. To theſe I ſhall now only add one obſervation, which comes in with peculiar propriety here; That innumerable inſtances may be given, in which thoſe very perſons who were ready to lift the ſecular arm againſt good men, have loudly complained of the exerciſe of diſcipline, and the cenſures of the church upon their crimes. Theſe they often ſtyle perſecution, and always affirm to flow from a perſecuting ſpirit. But as they are often neceſſary, ſo even when they are unjuſtly applied, it is plain from their very nature, that if they be groundleſs, they muſt be perfectly harmleſs.

Thus the ſtate of the world is ſo far from being an objection againſt, that it is a proof of the truth of the goſpel. True Chriſtians have ſuffered from every quarter; from within and from without; from open enemies and from falſe brethren. They have been firſt perſecuted, and then ſlandered as perſecuting others; nay, obliged to bear the odium of that very oppreſſion under which they groaned. Of all this they are fairly fore-warned by their Saviour, who ſays, "Behold, I ſend you forth as ſheep in "the midſt of wolves." They are expoſed to injurious treatment from many, and may expect to ſuffer without cauſe. None however make ſo cruel a havoc, as thoſe wolves who put on ſheep's clothing; and yet, of all their cruelty, the poor ſuffering ſheep muſt bear the blame.

2. From what hath been ſaid, you may ſee the guilt and danger of thoſe who falſely accuſe the children of God. Perhaps you may be ready wholly to refuſe the charge, and to ſay, Where is the neceſſity, where is the propriety of this at preſent? Have we not all civil and religious liberty? and are not religion and its miniſters in eſteem and repute? I anſwer, It is never unneceſſary. The fault I complain of is no part of the peculiar degeneracy of this age. It is not confined to any one age, country, or profeſſion, but is common to them all: and we would but deceive ourſelves, ſhould we fondly fancy we are exempt-

ed from it. Nay, our preſent ſtate as a church and nation, ſeems to render ſuch a warning peculiarly ſeaſonable. We have long enjoyed outward peace. In every other country this has introduced a worldly ſpirit, ambition, luxury, and ſloth. And is there no veſtige of theſe characters among us now? Who will pretend it? Are there not ſome who cannot endure ſuch ſtrictneſs as is inconſiſtent with conformity to the gay and faſhionable world? Do not all ſuch incline to charge every profeſſion of piety with hypocriſy? Do they not conſider every faithful reprover, as an enemy to their peace? Do they not hear with ſecret pleaſure, and ſpread with apparent triumph, every report, to the prejudice of ſuch troublers of Iſrael?

This then is the character; and as many of you as conſcience charges with the guilt, may ſee your danger. You may ſee whoſe cauſe you plead, and whoſe reward you ſhall ſhare. What inward enmity do you diſcover againſt the ſpirit and power of true religion? You are of the number of thoſe who "Hate the light, and will not come "to the light, leſt your deeds ſhould be reproved." You are of the number of thoſe who ſay "to the ſeers, ſee not, "and to the prophets, propheſy not unto us right things, "ſpeak unto us ſmooth things, and propheſy deceit." You will not "endure ſound doctrine," but love and ſolly only that which will exerciſe and amuſe your imagination and fancy, ſooth and gratify your pride and vanity, or make and keep you at peace with yourſelves. You are aſleep in ſecurity, and will avoid every thing that may tend to diſturb or interrupt your dangerous repoſe. And how hurtful is your conduct to others? You blaſt the characters and leſſen the uſefulneſs of the miniſters of Chriſt. You bring an evil report upon the truth, by rendering them odious or contemptible who bear it. —And if we, my brethren, who are miniſters of the goſpel, imitate this example in any meaſure, if we diſcover a ſuſpicion and jealouſy, or an averſion and hatred, at all who are more diligent than ourſelves, what diſhonor muſt fall upon our profeſſion, what a hindrance is it to the edification of others, and what guilt do we bring upon our own ſouls.

3. If this has been the conſtant lot of all the ſervants of God, to be accuſed as ſeditious and troubleſome, let every cautious perſon beware of being miſled by the perſecuting cry. I aſk any man who is converſant in the world, if he hath not, in many inſtances, been inſenſibly taught to form a hateful idea, or to entertain a deſpicable opinion of many miniſters, without the leaſt perſonal knowledge, the leaſt ſatisfying evidence or proof. What is the reaſon? Why, he hath been told, that they are proud, hypocritical, factious, cenſorious, troubleſome men. Well, the thing is poſſible, no doubt. But, in the mean time, it is far from being certain; and this ſort of character induſtriouſly propagated, is no evidence of it at all, or rather is a preſumption of the contrary. You ſee, from the inſtances produced above, that this is a reproach perpetually thrown upon the moſt upright and faithful of the ſervants of God; that it may very naturally ariſe from their fidelity itſelf; and that it cannot be avoided by thoſe who reſiſt the corrupt meaſures, who reprove the public vices, or who ſhame the criminal lazineſs, and negligence of others. An ignorant, vicious, worthleſs miniſter, is envied by no body. He is therefore quite ſafe from all the poiſoned arrows which fly from that quarter. He is rather a foil to many, to ſet off and illuſtrate their own comparative excellence. He is therefore often pardoned, pitied, and protected. Whereas a faithful miniſter, who openly dares to bear witneſs againſt the apoſtacy of others, is traduced and ſlandered, loaded with imaginary crimes, and often falls a martyr to the ſinking cauſe of truth and righteouſneſs.

4. Since the world is ſo prone to receive the accuſation of faction againſt the children of God, let them be careful to give no real ground for it. Unjuſt calumny has ſometimes the contrary effect. When men find, that it is impoſſible to pleaſe a capricious world, or wholly to eſcape ſlander, they are apt to give up all ſolicitude upon that head, and take no farther pains to avoid ſuſpected appearances. This I take to be, preciſely, what the Scripture calls being "overcome of evil." But how much better is it "to overcome evil with good? Let us, as often as poſſi-

ble, confute the accuſation by an unblameable carriage; and when we muſt ſuffer, let us be careful that we ſuffer, not as evil doers, but for well doing. For this purpoſe I would humbly offer to miniſters the two following directions, which I eſteem of great moment.

(1.) Let all our zeal for the glory of God be conducted not only with ſteadineſs, but with meekneſs. Let us ever remember, that the wrath of man worketh not the righteouſneſs of God. Let our language be always ſtrictly guarded, and free from expreſſions of rage and fury. If we are faithful to our duty, it will ſufficiently prokoke ſinners, we need not add to it by any mixture of human paſſion. What noble and effectual principles are we furniſhed with in Scripture, for avoiding every dangerous extreme? Love to God, and love to man, make up the ſum of practical religion. Theſe are the immediate fruits of faith, and all the truths of the goſpel tend to ſtrengthen and improve them. And as love to God produces indignation againſt ſin, reſolution and boldneſs in oppoſing it; ſo, love to man will naturally produce the deepeſt compaſſion for the miſerable ſtate of every enemy of God, and prevent firmneſs from degenerating into violence.

(2.) The other direction I would offer upon this ſubject is, that miniſters take care to avoid officiouſly intermeddling in civil matters. A miniſter ſhould be ſeparated and ſet apart for his own work; he ſhould be conſecrated to his office. It is little glory to him to be eminently ſkilled in any other ſcience, except ſuch as may be handmaids to theology, and are by him habitually turned into a divine channel. Miniſters giving themſelves to worldly employments, have been commonly of bad fame; and, where there is a ſufficient proviſion made for their maintenance, ſeems to be an unjuſt alienation of their time and talents. But it is ſtill more ſinful and dangerous, for them to deſire or claim the direction of ſuch matters as fall within the province of the civil magiſtrate. When our bleſſed Saviour ſays, "My kingdom is not of this world," he plainly intimates to his diſciples that they have no title to intermeddle with ſtate affairs. Nay, he expreſsly warns them againſt a lordly and arbitrary dominion,

even in their own proper ſphere. "The kings of the "Gentiles exerciſe lordſhip over them; and they that "exerciſe authority upon them are called benefactors. "But ye ſhall not be ſo: but he that is greateſt among you "let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he "that doth ſerve."* I cannot help mentioning here, that this is one of the things, for which our worthy anceſtors of the church of Scotland (now deſpiſed by many) deſerve the higheſt commendation. It was an invariable principle with them, to be againſt the civil power and places of kirkmen. And ſurely, if miniſters confine themſelves entirely to their own proper duty, they will be much leſs liable to exception than otherwiſe. They may then, warrantably uſe the greateſt fidelity in reproving, and the greateſt ſtrictneſs in diſcipline; and though the wicked ſlander and oppoſe them, the good will defend them, and God will ſupport them.

5. In the laſt place, Since the charge of faction and ſedition has been always brought againſt faithful miniſters, let us learn to bear it with patience, and never diſſemble the truth, or depart, in any meaſure, from our duty, in order to avoid it. A perſon of a generous mind feels a wound in his reputation more deeply, than almoſt any other injury. We are ſtill apt fondly to flatter ourſelves, that as religion is truly amiable in itſelf, and ought to make no enemies, that therefore we ſhall have none. Some are very apt to omit, or ſlightly to perform, ſeveral parts of their duty, through that "fear of man that bringeth a ſnare." They are unwilling to forego the hope, that by certain prudent compliances they will conciliate and preſerve the favor of every man and every party. But the expectation is wholly vain. The experience of many ages hath proved it ſo. Let us therefore bear with patience the falſe accuſation. It hath been the lot of the beſt and worthieſt men in every age. It was the lot of our bleſſed maſter, and ſhall we refuſe to bear his croſs? Is it not "enough for the diſciple that he be as his maſter, and the "ſervant that he be as his Lord?" The triumph of ſin-

* Luke xxii. 25, 26.

ners is but very ſhort. In a little time all earthly relations ſhall be diſſolved. Then high and low, magiſtrates and ſubjects, miniſters and people, ſhall ſtand before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt. He ſhall "render to every one ac-"cording to his deeds." There the great and noble ſhall find no partial favor; there the poor and mean ſhall not eſcape obſervation; and there the lying ſlanderer ſhall be put to eternal ſilence. He ſhall openly acknowledge every faithful ſervant, and "bring forth his righteouſneſs as "the light, and his judgment as the noon-day."

THE CHARGE.

SIR,

AS you are now ordained a miniſter of Chriſt, and have received the charge of this congregation, I hope you will bear with me a little, while I offer you a few advices as to the diſcharge of your important truſt. And I cannot help beginning by congratulating you on the unanimous call you have received from this people. However deſpiſed by ſome, I count it a moſt happy circumſtance both for you and them. It introduces you with great advantage. It gives you a fair and impartial hearing; and, if you do not preſerve their eſteem and love, it will probably be, in a great meaſure, owing to yourſelf.

I muſt firſt of all beſeech you, in the moſt earneſt manner, to be ſtrict and frequent, in enquiring into the truth and reality of religion in your own ſoul. Perſonal religion is the foundation of all relative duties. They can ſcarcely be performed in any tolerable meaſure without it. It is equally neceſſary to your uſefulneſs, and to your comfort. It is a difficult thing, and it is a dreadful thing, to preach an unknown Saviour. Examine, therefore, whether you are "born again;" whether you have "paſſ-"ed from death to life;" whether you are united to Chriſt by faith; whether you know by experience, the difference between a ſtate of nature and a ſtate of grace, or not. While I ſpeak this, I aſſure you, I do not mean it, and I hope none will interpret it, as any reflection againſt, or implying any ſuſpicion of you, who have given me no cauſe. I ſpeak it from a deep impreſſion of its importance to us all. How miſerable a caſe is it, to have it as our buſineſs to bring others to the kingdom of heaven, and

be ourſelves at laſt thruſt out. A miniſter is as much liable to ſelf-deceit as any other, and in ſome reſpects more ſo. We are in danger of thinking ourſelves too eaſily ſafe, by comparing that outward regularity, to which our office itſelf, even from ſecular motives, obliges us, with the licentious extravagance of prophane ſinners. We may alſo miſtake our frequent thinking and ſpeaking of the "things of God," in the way of our calling, for an evidence of true religion in ourſelves. Nay, we are in danger of miſtaking thoſe gifts, with which God furniſheth us for the benefit of his own people, for the fruits of the Spirit, and gracious diſpoſitions in our own hearts. Maintain, therefore, a holy jealouſy over yourſelf. "Give di-"ligence to make your calling an election ſure." And, if you ſave your own ſoul, you will probably carry many others with you to a better world; and be able to ſay, after the example of Chriſt, "Behold I, and the children "whom God hath given me."

As to the duties of your office, ſee that you preach the pure and uncorrupted doctrine of Chriſt. Preach Chriſt crucified, who is "the way, and the truth, and the life;" and without whom "no man can go unto the Father." You will never be able to make men truly good, till you convince them of their loſt ſtate by nature; and thence make them ſee the neceſſity of juſtification by the free grace of God, through the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt. If you would know what place Chriſt ought to hold in your preaching and ſcheme of doctrine, obſerve what room he fills in the oracles of truth. To the croſs of Chriſt give all the prophets witneſs. The croſs of Chriſt is the ſum and ſubſtance of the New Teſtament. The croſs of Chriſt is the Chriſtian's hope. The croſs of Chriſt is the Chriſtian's glory. You ſee, by a ſerious peruſal of the New Teſtament, that the ſacred writers largely illuſtrate the ſeveral parts of his character and office, and ſeem with pleaſure to embrace every opportunity of ſpeaking to his praiſe. They ſhow how much we are to depend upon him for ſtrength in the diſcharge of our duty; and enforce all their exhortations by motives drawn from what he hath done, and is ſtill doing, for his church and people. You

will ſoon find from experience, that no cold reaſonings on the nature and beauty of virtue, can have ſuch influence in mortifying corrupt affections, as a believing view of a pierced Saviour. For this very reaſon many deteſt the doctrine of the croſs. It gives a mortal blow to every darling luſt. It gives ſuch a view of the holineſs and juſtice of God, as is intolerable to all thoſe who cannot think of breaking their attachment to ſin and vanity.

There is one particular reaſon why I have mentioned this at preſent, and inſiſted on it at ſome length. It is ordinary to meet with ſerious perſons who complain much, that from many pulpits they hear little or nothing of the doctrine of the grace of God; that the grand and leading truths of the goſpel are either flatly contradicted, or kept entirely out of view, and ſomething elſe ſubſtituted in their place. I am far from ſaying that this is indeed the caſe. On the contrary, I tremble to think that it ſhould be but barely poſſible; for all theſe doctrines are clearly contained in the Confeſſion of Faith, which every miniſter in Scotland has ſubſcribed. If, therefore, there be any one among us, who doth not preach the doctrine of original ſin, of Chriſt's imputed righteouſneſs, juſtification by free grace, the neceſſity of regeneration, and the operations of the Spirit, he is guilty of perjury of the worſt kind, for which I know no excuſe. Such a perſon is not only chargeable with departing from the faith, but with an abſolute proſtitution of conſcience, and a whole life of hypocriſy and deceit. I am indeed entirely at a loſs how to account for this apprehenſion in the people, of a difference in doctrine; but as there certainly is ſuch an apprehenſion, I think I cannot diſcharge my duty on this occaſion, without exhorting you to be clear and explicit upon theſe heads. The truth is, they are of ſo general conſequence, and have ſo neceſſary a connexion with every other part of religion, that, be the ſubject what it will, where they are firmly believed, I ſhould imagine the manner of thinking and ſpeaking would be ſuch, as to leave no jealouſy of an intended omiſſion.

This leads me to exhort you, to preach plainly, or in a way that may be level to the capacities of the hearers,

both as to ſentiment and expreſſion. God forbid, that I ſhould deſire you to ruſh into a pulpit without preparation, to preach in a diſorderly method, or in a mean, ſlovenly or indecent ſtyle. All pains ſhould be taken to ſeek out fit and "acceptable words." But there cannot be a greater abſurdity in ſpeaking to a multitude of common people, than to diſcourſe in ſuch a ſtiff and abſtract way, as it is plainly impoſſible for them to comprehend. Nor is it any leſs abſurdity to dreſs up an harangue with exceſſive elegance, and a vain, ornamented foppery of ſtyle. Some diſcourſes may very well be likened to painted windows, which, with fine colours upon themſelves, keep out the light, and make the houſe comfortleſs and dark. Such conduct is ordinarily followed by thoſe, who would willingly recommend themſelves to perſons of better taſte; but it muſt evidently render them contemptible to every perſon of ſound judgment. However, it is much worſe than abſurd; for it is very wicked, when the everlaſting ſalvation of ſinners is at ſtake, to ſpeak in ſuch a manner as they cannot underſtand, or ſuch as tends only to amuſe their fancy, and never can reach their hearts. If we would know what is a proper and juſt manner of ſtyle and compoſition in preaching, let us conſider how any man would ſpeak, if he was on trial for his own life. Would he not ſpeak with great plainneſs, earneſtneſs and force? And is not the ſalvation of ſouls of infinitely more moment than any man's life? And ſhould it not, if we believe the Scriptures, be more regarded by every faithful miniſter?

You muſt alſo take care to preach experimentally and particularly. You will ſoon find that this is the only profitable way of preaching, and that, unleſs you apply general truths to the ſeveral claſſes and characters in your audience, they will make but a ſorry improvement of the beſt inſtruction. The ignorant cannot, and the wiſer will not apply them to themſelves. Beſides, the general way is not only uſeleſs, but pernicious and hurtful. Suppoſe I ſhould make an encomium on the wiſe, juſt, and gracious government of God over his rational creation, and obſerve what reaſon all have to rejoice under his admini-

ſtration. Should I ſay ſo this audience without diſtinction, it would be to many a dangerous and ſtupifying poiſon. A juſt and holy God, is a conſuming fire to all the workers of iniquity. Thoſe who are ſtill in their ſins, ſhould tremble to think of the government of God.

Beſides public preaching, you muſt be diligent among your people "from houſe to houſe." You muſt not neglect family inſtruction, and perſonal admonition or reproof. This is, if not the moſt uſeful part of a miniſter's work, at leaſt abſolutely neceſſary to the ſucceſs of his preaching. It is alſo by far the moſt laborious part, from which ſlothful men are moſt apt to excuſe themſelves. A man may gratify his vanity by preaching, and public performances; or, the neglect being viſible, he may be compelled to regularity by fear of reproach or proſecution. But diligence in private, can ſcarcely ariſe from any thing but a ſenſe of duty, and of the preſence and obſervation of God.

The exerciſe of diſcipline is another part of your duty which muſt not be omitted. It is of very great moment to the intereſt of religion. It is a ſaying of one of the firſt reformers, "They that deſire to baniſh diſcipline, "deſire to baniſh Chriſt from his church." There muſt needs be offences in the Chriſtian church. But when diſcipline is neglected, then the offence becomes unſpeakably more dangerous, eſpecially to the young and weak. It makes them think lightly of the character and privileges of a Chriſtian, when there is either a promiſcuous admiſſion to church-communion, or when openly wicked perſons are ſuffered to continue without cenſure. When you come to inſtruct young perſons, in order to renewing their baptiſmal engagements in the Lord's ſupper; or, if ever you have occaſion to inſtruct a heathen in order to baptiſm, I can aſſure you, from experience, you will find the unhappy effect of the low ſtate of diſcipline among us. It will immediately ſtrike yourſelf, and theſe catechumens will ſoon betray, by their diſcourſe, how hard it is to have a juſt ſenſe of the ſanctity of the Chriſtian character, while ſo many prophane perſons are ſuffered to be called Chriſtians; and not a few whoſe con-

duct is very exceptionable, continue to be admitted at ſtated times, to the ſeals of God's covenant.

How inexcuſeable are we in this neglect? If the firſt Chriſtians, without the help or ſanction of an eſtabliſhment, kept ſo ſtrict a diſcipline, what might we do, who have the countenance and approbation of the civil power. In diſcipline then, be ſtrict, regular, and impartial. Eſpecially be impartial. It is commonly want of impartiality, that makes us fail in ſtrictneſs. You will have many enemies to impartiality in diſcipline. You will have the great and wealthy, many of whom, though they live in open defiance of the laws and ordinances of Chriſt, yet will be much offended, and complain of it as a grievous injury, if by a judicial ſentence you deprive them of his name. Nay, you will find in every congregation ſome profeſſing piety, who, though they are well pleaſed with, and commend the ſtrict exerciſe of diſcipline in the caſe of others, yet when it comes to touch themſelves, or their own relations, will uſe many arts to evade it. But if you be firm and unbiaſſed in ſo good a cauſe, it will have a ſenſible effect.

This leads me to exhort you in the whole of your work, public and private, to beware of the ſin of man-pleaſing. I do not ſay, beware of popularity: becauſe, in the ſenſe to which common language hath confined that word, it is but one half of the ſnare. Beſides, in propriety of ſpeech, popularity ſhould ſignify only being accepted and beloved, which in itſelf is neither duty nor ſin, but a bleſſing. Man-pleaſing ſignifies, in Scripture, having this as the end and motive of our actions, rather than being acceptable to God. You ought, indeed, for edification, to avoid diſpleaſing any without neceſſity. But as in this, ſo in every other thing, you ſhould have a far higher principle, than merely courting the favor either of great or ſmall, good or bad. It is, doubtleſs, a mean and deſpicable principle, to act only with a view of gaining the applauſe of the vulgar and ignorant. But I have often wondered, how ſome ſhould ſo boldly and uncharitably lay this to the charge of their brethren, without conſidering how eaſy it is, with at leaſt,

equal juſtice, to preſume that they are under the influence, and acting with a view to pleaſe the great. I am ſure, there is a much ſtronger temptation to this than the former. And, if am not miſtaken, fawning and ſervility hath been the road, in which ambitious and corrupt churchmen have travelled to preferment in every age. The truth is, they are equally deteſtable in the ſight of God. But the laſt is much more deſtructive to the intereſt of religion than the firſt. The favor of the multitude can ſcarcely be obtained, without either the truth or the appearance of piety; but the favor of the great is often obtained by ſilence, and ſuffering them in their crimes, being aſſiſtant in their pleaſures, or ſubſervient to their political deſigns.

To deliver you, Sir, from both, remember the condition on which you hold your office. "Son of man, "I have made thee a watchman to the houſe of Iſrael: "therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them "warning from me. When I ſay unto the wicked, Thou "ſhalt ſurely die; and thou giveſt him not warning, nor "ſpeakeſt to warn the wicked from his wicked way to ſave "his life: the ſame wicked man ſhall die in his iniquity, "but his blood will I require at thine hand."* Forget then the fooliſh accuſations of popularity or vanity; and conſider, that your people are daily carried to their graves, and you muſt give an account of every ſoul that periſhes through your neglect.

To conclude, be much in earneſt prayer to God, that he would fit you for your work, and crown your labours with ſucceſs. Prayer is abſolutely neceſſary the to ſtedfaſtneſs and growth of every believer, and eſpecially to a miniſter. If you believe the goſpel, you will believe that "every good gift cometh from above;" that God only can make you an able and uſeful paſtor; and this will make you importunate with him for a plentiful meaſure of the Holy Spirit to fit you for his ſervice. And I deſire to join in praying, that God, for Chriſt's ſake, would make you an "able miniſter of the New Teſtament,"—and help you to preach the goſpel, not with the wiſdom of "words,"—but with "the Holy Ghoſt ſent down from "heaven."

* Ezek. iii. 17, 18.

EXHORTATION

TO THE

PEOPLE.

My Brethren,

YOU have heard the charge given to your miniſter. Are there then, ſo many duties incumbent on him by his ſtanding in the relation of a paſtor to you? is not the relation mutual? And are there not ſeveral correſpondent duties incumbent on you as his people? I beg your patience, while I put you in mind of a few of the moſt important and neceſſary.

In the firſt place, It is evidently your duty diligently to attend upon his miniſtry. It is plainly impoſſible that you can profit by him, if you do not hear him. I am ſorry that there are many in theſe days, who pour contempt upon the ordinances of Chriſt's inſtitution. But in particular, there hath been, of late, a great and remarkable deſertion of public worſhip by thoſe of higher rank. There is a happy opportunity in this caſe to put all ſuch among you in mind, that having ſubſcribed a call to their miniſter, they ſtand bound by conſent to attend upon him. Is it not ſurpriſing to think, that any ſhould forget the terms in which that invitation runs. You intreat him "to take "the charge of your ſouls, and promiſe him all due obe- "dience and ſubmiſſion in the Lord." Can a man honeſtly ſubſcribe this, who ſeldom comes within the walls of any church? One would be counted infamous in the world, who ſhould act in the face of a ſigned obligation, in any other matter, or who even ſhould falſify a ſolemn promiſe. And, is it leſs criminal, becauſe it relates to

eligion and the ſervice of God? It is indeed ſeldom reſented or puniſhed by men, becauſe the offence is not immediately againſt them, but it remains to be puniſhed by that righteous God, "To whom vengeance belongs,— "and who will not be mocked."

In the next place, my brethren, let me intreat you to be tender of the character of your miniſter, and of miniſters in general. As their office makes the guilt of their ſins great, and as a ſtain on their character is moſt hurtful to religion, on both accounts, you ought not raſhly to receive an accuſation againſt them. I do not mean to aſk indulgence to the unworthy, I give them up freely to that reproach and contempt which they juſtly deſerve. But let it fall upon the perſon, and not upon the office. Do not transfer the faults of particulars to the whole order. It is eaſy to obſerve the different reception which the faults or miſcarriages of miniſters meet with, from perſons differently diſpoſed. The good are affected with grief and concern for the offence, or filled with zeal and indignation againſt the ſinner. But looſe and careleſs perſons diſparage the profeſſion, and bleſs themſelves in their own uniformity and conſiſtency of character. You may ſpare your reflections, "That miniſters are but men, miniſters "are but like other men," and the like, when, I aſſure you, we deny it not. We have all the ſame great intereſt at ſtake. We often ſpeak the more earneſtly to you, leſt, while we preach the goſpel to others, we ourſelves ſhould be caſt-aways; and many times deſcribe the workings of a deceitful, wandering, ſlothful, worldly mind, by taking the copy from our own.

It falls very properly in my way on this occaſion, to take notice of a reproach thrown upon miniſters, by the miſtake or perverſion of two of the queſtions uſually put at an ordination, and which you have juſt heard put to your miniſter. They are ſuppoſed by many to be ſuch as no man can anſwer with truth, and ſo quite improper to be put at all. The firſt of them is in the following terms, "Are not zeal for the honor of God, love "to Jeſus Chriſt, and deſire of ſaving your ſouls, your

"great motives, and chief inducements, to enter into the "function of the holy miniſtry, and not worldly deſigns "and intereſts." This is maliciouſly interpreted to ſuppoſe, that a miniſter in accepting of a fixed charge, hath no view or intention, primary or ſecondary, of being provided of a maintenance. This would be both unnatural and unreaſonable. "They that ſerve at the altar, muſt live by "the altar." The plain meaning is, That the great motives of a miniſter, in conſecrating himſelf to this employment, and accepting the particular ſtation aſſigned him, ought to be the honor of God, and intereſt of religion, as expreſſed above. And ſurely, that this ſhould be caſe, hath nothing in it incredible in our country, the proviſion for the miniſtry not being ſo large, but a man of tolerable abilities hath a much greater hazard of riſing to wealth and dignity in many other employments. But alas! how ignorant are they who cavil at this queſtion? Do they not know that every Chriſtian is bound habitually and ſupremely to regard the glory of God in all his actions. This is not peculiar to miniſters, except ſo far as they ought to be exemplary in every thing. Wo to every man in this aſſembly, be his employment what it will, if he does not habitually point his whole actions to the glory of God. "Ye are "not your own; ye are bought with a price; therefore "glorify God with your bodies, and your ſpirits, which are "God's."*

The other queſtion is this, "Have you uſed any undue "methods by yourſelf or others, in procuring this call?" It is impoſſible to find fault with this queſtion, but by leaving out the word, undue. And indeed, it is ſo far from being wrong, that there would be no harm if it were more particularly explained. It was probably intended to diſcourage all briguing and ſolicitation, other than a man's real character does for itſelf, or the free unbiaſſed judgment of others, inclines them to do in his behalf. I apprehend it does not reach a reproof to all thoſe, who either promote or hinder ſettlements from political connections, or in expectation of temporal favors: and to thoſe who, by promiſes or threatenings, endeavor to influence their inferiors

* 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

in ſuch a cauſe, In the mean time, I dare ſay it will be allowed, that any thing of this kind done by a miniſter himſelf, or at his direction, in his own favor, would be very wrong: and, bleſſed be God, it is at preſent among us conſidered as highly indecent and criminal.

I muſt alſo put you in mind of the great duty of family inſtruction and government. Heads of families muſt prepare their children and ſervants for receiving benefit by public inſtruction, and endeavor by repetition to fix it in their minds. It is our duty to ſpeak plainly, no doubt; but it is impoſſible, preſerving the dignity of the pulpit, to ſpeak in ſuch a manner as to be underſtood by thoſe who have had no previous inſtruction in a familiar way. It is like caſting ſeed upon an unopened, unprepared ſoil, which takes no root, and brings forth no fruit. Is it not hard, that, when many are ſo ready to find fault with every neglect of miniſters, and ſometimes expect more work from one than ten can perform, they ſhould take ſo little pains in their families, theſe ſmaller diſtricts, which are committed to their own charge.

To conclude all, Strive together with your miniſter in your prayers to God for him. There is no way more effectual to prepare him for ſerving you in the goſpel, and there is no way more proper for preparing you to attend upon his miniſtry. If you make conſcience of this duty, you will come to receive the anſwer of your prayers, and indeed to hear the word of God. Alas! that there ſhould be ſo few of our hearers of this charitable, ſympathiſing kind. We have ſome ſtupid and inſenſible hearers, ſome proud and diſdainful hearers, many criticiſing and cenſuring hearers, but few praying hearers. Let all that fear God give themſelves to this duty. And let them not only remember that corner of God's vineyard in which their own lot is caſt, but the kingdom of Chriſt in general; and pray, that his name may be great, "from the riſing of the ſun, unto his going down," Amen.

PRAYER for NATIONAL PROSPERITY and for the REVIVAL of RELIGION inſeparably connected.

A

SERMON,

Preached on Thurſday, February 16, 1758, *being the day appointed in Scotland for the late Public Faſt.*

ISAIAH, li. 9.

Awake, awake, put on ſtrength, O arm of the LORD: Awake as in the ancient days in the generations of old. Art not thou it that hath cut Rahab and wounded the dragon.

MY BRETHREN,

WE are this day called by our ſovereign to the duty of ſolemn faſting and humiliation, and to earneſt prayer for the bleſſing of God on his councils and arms. Religion and humanity conſpire in urging us to a hearty compliance, eſpecially while public affairs wear ſo threatening an aſpect. It ought alſo to awaken the attention, and increaſe the ſerioufneſs of every particular worſhipping aſſembly, that they are joining with ſo many others in intreating deliverance from theſe national calamities, in which all are equally concerned.

We have often, for ſome years paſt, profeſſed to humble ourſelves in the ſight of God, and have done it, alas! with a ſhameful coldneſs and indifference, or with an hypocriſy ſtill more criminal. But it is remarkable, that ſuch is the ſituation of affairs at preſent, as hath given an alarm

even to ſome of the moſt inſenſible, and conſtrained them to conſider this duty as now ſomewhat more than a form. There has been for ſome time paſt, ſuch a continuance and increaſe of public judgments, ſuch a ſeries of abortive projects, and broken diſconcerted ſchemes, as makes the moſt obſtinate and inconſiderate ſtand and pauſe, and ſeriouſly aſk, Is there not a cauſe?

Our ſetting apart this day, and applying ourſelves to the duty of faſting and prayer, implies a confeſſion of the power and providence of God.

It implies, that we believe in him, as the Almighty Creator, and righteous Governor of the world; the ſupreme Diſpoſer of every event, and ſovereign Arbiter of the fate of nations. How were it to be wiſhed, that there was a juſt ſenſe of this truth on the minds of all of every rank! And that, in all who are in any meaſure ſincere on this occaſion, the impreſſion may not be tranſient and partial, but laſting and effectual! It ſhould excite us to a holy jealouſy over ourſelves, that we have ſo often eſſayed the like duty without any apparent ſucceſs. "Is there un-"righteouſneſs with God? God forbid!" The fault, doubtleſs, lies in ourſelves. Our faſts have not been ſuch as God has choſen, and therefore he hath refuſed to hear our prayers.

In general, no doubt the evidence and the effect of an acceptable faſt, is repentance compleated by reformation. Where this is wanting, we are juſtly liable to the charge brought by the prophet Iſaiah againſt the children of Iſrael, "Bring no more vain oblations, incenſe is an abomination "unto me, the new moons and ſabbaths, the calling of aſ-"ſemblies I cannot away with, it is iniquity, even the ſo-"lemn meeting. Your new moons, and your appointed "feaſts my ſoul hateth, they are a trouble unto me, I "am weary to bear them. And when ye ſpread forth "your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when "ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are "full of blood."* There is no queſtion but the unreſtrained flood if impiety which has overſpread this nation,

* Iſa. i. 13, 14, 15.

ſolicits divine vengeance, and prevents the efficacy even of the ſincere prayers that are offered up for deliverance and mercy. But as, with reſpect to particular perſons, every error or defect in practice is the conſequence of an erroneous or defective principle, as every vicious action proceeds from an impure heart; ſo, in a national capacity, I am perſuaded that our faſting and prayer has been fundamentally wrong, or eſſentially defective in itſelf, and therefore, has been followed by little or no ſenſible fruit; or rather that impiety, which it ſhould have removed, it hath only contributed to increaſe.

For this reaſon my intention at this time is to point out to you what is the juſt and proper object of prayer for divine aid in a time of public calamity, as well as the great encouragement to its exerciſe. For this there is a proper foundation in the paſſage of Scripture juſt read in your hearing. In the former part of the chapter, the prophet had pronounced many gracious promiſes, of inward and ſpiritual proſperity, and of outward protection and ſecurity to the church, though ſurrounded and threatened, by enemies to her intereſts in both reſpects. He then changes the form of his diſcourſe, perſonates believers, and in their name, as one of them, addreſſes to God the prayer in the text, "Awake, awake, put on ſtrength, O arm of the "Lord: awake as in the ancient days, in the generations "of old: art not thou it that hath cut Rahab and wounded "the dragon?"

The beauty and ſtrength of this language, the juſtneſs and force of the figures here uſed, it is almoſt impoſſible to overlook. The prophet prays for ſuch a diſplay of divine power and mercy as might be ſignal and ſenſible. "Awake, awake, put on ſtrength," that is, exert thy power, diſcover thy glory in ſuch a manner, as that thy preſent forbearance may be like the vigor of a waking man, compared to the defenceleſs and inactive ſtate of one that is faſt aſleep. "O arm of the Lord." This expreſſion the arm of the Lord, with the addition of making bare his holy arm, is frequently uſed in Scripture; and it is ſo ſtrong, and at the ſame time, ſo intelligible a figure, that it is impoſſible to amplify or explain, without weak-

ening it. In the laſt part of the verſe, he animates his own faith, and enforces his requeſt, by calling to remembrance paſt tranſactions, and former diſplays of the power and grace of an unchangeable God. By Rahab and the dragon we are to underſtand Egypt and her king, as appears by comparing other paſſages of Scripture, particularly by Pſ. lxxxvi. 4. and Ezek. xxix. 3. the laſt of which runs thus: "Thus ſaith the Lord, Behold, I am againſt "thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth "in the midſt of his rivers: which hath ſaid, my river is "mine own, and I have made it for myſelf."

In diſcourſing on this ſubject, what I propoſe, through the aſſiſtance of divine grace, is,

I. To point out to you the import of this prayer in the firſt part of this paſſage, "Awake, awake, put on ſtrength, "O arm of the Lord."

II. To conſider the encouragement included in the laſt part of it, "Awake as in ancient days, in the generations "of old: art not thou it that hath cut Rahab, and wound-"ed the dragon?"

III. To apply the ſubject to our preſent ſituation.

And we are to conſider,

I. The meaning and import of the prayer: "Awake, "awake, put on ſtrength, O arm of the Lord." And in this I have no hope either of inſtructing or perſuading any but thoſe who have ſome meaſure of real religion, who do unfeignedly believe, and will, when called upon, recollect the conſtant ſuperintendency of Divine Providence. Theſe only will be ſenſible that, as every event is directed and over-ruled by the Almighty, ſo there are righteous, wiſe and gracious purpoſes to be ſerved by them. All men it is true, are ready to complain under diſtreſs. The moſt wicked and profligate, "when the waters are gone into "their ſoul," when they feel their miſery, will cry for relief. And, as they will turn them on every hand, and lay hold on every twig that may afford the leaſt proſpect of

ſaving them from ſinking, ſo the terror of divine power, with which public calamity is ſometimes accompanied, will even make them cry unto God. But there is a great difference, between this complaint of the miſerable, and the prayer of faith, which proceeds upon juſt views of the nature and government of God, and is aſſured of ſucceſs. It may ſometimes pleaſe God to make uſe of deſolating judgments or alarming public ſtrokes to awaken a ſecure thoughtleſs generation; but dutiful, acceptable and ſucceſsful prayer for their removal, can only be the work of his own children.

Perhaps it may be thought unneceſſary to direct perſons of this character to the proper object of their prayers, as they muſt be ſuppoſed habitually to flow from right principles, and to point at juſt and warrantable ends. But it is certain, that, when wickedneſs and profaneneſs greatly and univerſally prevail in any nation, the real ſervants of God are not only few in number, but even this little flock, always receives ſome degree of infection. This we are taught to expect by our bleſſed Saviour, who ſays, "And "becauſe iniquity ſhall abound, the love of many ſhall "wax cold." They may both be negligent and defective in their duty, reſtraining prayer before God, and may be in a great meaſure unmindful of the great and principal views with which they ought to offer up their interceſſory requeſts. But, hoping that all ſuch among you as are juſtly liable to this charge, will diſcern the light, and feel the force of divine truth, it is my deſire to ſtir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.

And, in general, ſuch a petition as this, "Awake, "awake, put on ſtrength, O arm of the Lord," ſuggeſts to us, that our prayers for divine interpoſition and deliverance from public calamities ſhould be ſupremely directed to the glory of God. This, as it is, upon the whole, the leading purpoſe of every real believer, ſo it ought to hallow every ſingle action, and purify every particular deſire. Therefore our prayers muſt be conceived in ſuch a manner, and our deſires after deliverance muſt be ſo qualified, that the ſupreme honor due to God may be preſerved inviolate, that duty may

maintain its precedency before intereſt, and ſin may be ſtill more feared and avoided than ſuffering. The great end both of perſonal affliction, and national correction, is to weaken our attachment to preſent and temporal enjoyment, by ſtaining its glory, and convincing us of its vanity. If then our chief or only aim, in aſking deliverance from outward calamity, is that we may again recover the eaſe and quiet of ſecurity, and the pleaſure of plenty, though we may ſeem to honor God by imploring his aid, yet is our homage really given to a ſenſual idol.

That this is neither impoſſible nor unfrequent, is plain from the hiſtory of the children of Iſrael. They often applied to God in their ſtraits: "When he ſlew them, then "they ſought him, they returned and enquired early after God."* But this ſort of ſeeking, merely for preſent relief, or temporal mercies, was far from being acceptable to him. We are told, that it was tempting God, thus "to aſk meat for their luſt."† In oppoſition to this, let us look into the grounds aſſigned in Scripture for God's granting deliverance and thence learn with what views we ought to implore it. The Pſalmiſt ſays, "Nevertheleſs "he ſaved them for his name's ſake, that he might make "his mighty power to be known."‡ And the prophet Ezekiel, "But I wrought for my name's ſake, that it "ſhould not be polluted before the Heathen among whom "they were, in whoſe ſight I made myſelf known to them, "in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt."

But, in order to illuſtrate this a little further, obſerve, that a juſt regard to the glory of God, in our prayers, implies the two following things. In the firſt place, That we expect deliverance from God alone, deſire that it may be attended with ſuch circumſtances as his hand and power may be ſeen in it, and are willing to acknowledge him as the ſupreme and only Author of it. This is plainly included in the words of the prophet, "Awake, awake, put "on ſtrength, O arm of the Lord." As if he had ſaid, In thee alone is our hope; "curſed be the man that maketh "fleſh his arm." A prophane irreligious people are al-

* Pſal. lxxviii. 34. † Pſal. lxxviii. 18. ‡ Pſal. cvi. 8.

ways prone, in undertaking any enterprize, to put their truſt in human proweſs, to glory and boaſt in the greatneſs of their ſtrength. And when they are diſappointed in their expectations, they are ready to dwell ſo much upon ſecond cauſes, that they entirely overlook, or are with great difficulty brought to acknowledge the ſupreme agency of God. We may, however be ſenſible, by his taking to himſelf ſo often, in Scripture, the title of the Lord of hoſts, "great in might and ſtrong in battle," that ſuch conduct is robbing him of the glory that is juſtly his due. Many are the warnings we have in the word of God not to place too much confidence in any human means of ſafety. "Put not your truſt in Princes (ſays the Pſalmiſt) "nor in the ſon of man in whom there is no help.* There "is no king ſaved by the multitude of an hoſt: a mighty "man is not delivered by much ſtrength. An horſe is a "vain thing for ſafety, neither can he deliver any by his "great ſtrength."† And there is no Scripture truth more frequently, or more ſenſibly confirmed in the courſe of providence. How often do we find, both in former and in later ages, the events of war diametrically oppoſite to the greateſt human probability, and the moſt confident human expectation?

Now prayer for divine interpoſition ſhould always be made under a deep impreſſion of this truth. And indeed we ſhall never come to importunity and fervency in prayer for ſuch a mercy, till we are ſomewhat affected with it. All the honor that is given to man is taken from God. All truſt and dependance on human means as ſuch, or on their own account, divides and weakens our reliance on God. But when he is conſidered as the ſingle and only ſource of relief, we apply with that ardor and earneſtneſs which neceſſity and extremity ſuggeſt. This doth not hinder the diligent uſe and application of outward means, but keeps them in their proper place, induces us to aſk the divine bleſſing upon them, and prevents us from provoking the divine jealouſy by idolizing and truſting in them.

* Pſ. cxlvi. 3. † Pſ. xxxiii. 16, 17.

It ought alſo to be our deſire, that the glory of divine power may viſibly ſhine in our deliverance; not only that his hand may do it, but that his hand may be ſeen in it, and, if poſſible, to the conviction of all. Nothing is more impious, and nothing more provoking to God, than when men arrogate to themſelves the honor of what they have done by his help, or acquired by the bounty of his providence. Hear the language of the proud monarch of the eaſt, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built, for "the houſe of the kingdom, by the might of MY power, "and for the honor of MY majeſty?"* But mark the unexpected change by the more powerful word of the King of Kings. "When the word was in the king's "mouth there fell a voice from heaven, ſaying, O King "Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is ſpoken, the kingdom is "departed from thee."† How often in Scripture is the deſtruction and puniſhment of kings and princes aſcribed to their ſelf-ſufficiency, inſolence and pride? Thus in that remarkable prophecy againſt the king of Babylon: "For thou haſt ſaid in thine heart, I will aſcend into "heaven, I will exalt my throne above the ſtars of God: "I will ſit alſo upon the mount of the congregation in "the ſides of the north. I will aſcend above the heights "of the clouds. I will be like the moſt High. Yet thou "ſhalt be brought down to hell, to the ſides of the pit. "They that ſee thee, ſhall narrowly look upon thee and "conſider thee, ſaying, Is this the man that made the "earth to tremble, that did ſhake kingdoms? That made "the world as a wilderneſs, and deſtroyed the cities there-"of; that opened not the houſe of his priſoners?"‡ How ſtrongly does this prove, that in order to pray acceptably for the interpoſition of divine Providence, we ſhould be willing that God alone ſhould have the honor entire and undivided. "That the lofty looks of man ſhould be "humbled, and the haughtineſs of man ſhould be bowed "down, and the Lord alone exalted in that day."|| Was it not thus that the ancient warriors of the holy nation fought and proſpered? In confidence of divine aid, or

* Dan. iv. 30. † Ver. 31. ‡ Iſ. xiv. 13, 17. || Iſ. ii. 11.

reſigned to the divine will, they went out and played the men for their people and the cities of their God. And when they had done ſo, they acknowledged that his right hand and his holy arm had gotten HIM the victory. See the ſong of Moſes on his victory over the Egyptians. "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: "Thy right hand, O Lord, has daſhed in pieces the ene- "my. And in the greatneſs of thine excellency thou haſt "overthrown them that roſe up againſt thee: Thou ſent- "eſt forth thy wrath, which conſumed them as ſtubble*."

I cannot conclude this branch of the ſubject without obſerving, that we have had in the courſe of Providence a very recent inſtance, both of a ſingular appearance of the hand of God in defence of a righteous cauſe, and a modeſt aſcription of it to the power of the Higheſt. That prince, who appears now to be the chief outward ſupport of the proteſtant cauſe in Europe, has been enabled literally (according to the ancient promiſe) "with five to "chaſe a hundred, and with a hundred to put ten thou- "ſand to flight." The greateſt earthly potentates had combined againſt him and conſpired his ruin. Aſſured of victory, they were forging chains for his followers, and dividing his inheritance by lot. But in the name of the Lord he ſet up his ſtandard. The Lord turned the counſels of his enemies into confuſion. His victories have been numerous, extraordinary and important. And he hath all along avoided boaſting and vain-glory, and piouſly acknowledged that "Salvation belongeth unto God."

In the ſecond place, in applying to God for an extraordinary interpoſition of his providence, we ought alſo to pray for a diſpenſation of his grace and mercy. When we pray that the arm of the Lord may awake and put on ſtrength, it ſhould be that a revival of religion may accompany temporal relief, and that by a plentiful effuſion of the Holy Spirit many ſinners may be delivered from the worſt of bondage, and brought to the glorious liberty of the children of God. As this ſhould be in itſelf the object of our deſire, ſo it ſhould be inſeparably joined

* Ex. xv. 6, 7.

with the other, and their mutual connection ſtill kept in view. Temporal mercies to a nation, as well as to particular perſons, ought always to be made ſubſervient to the promoting of truth and righteouſneſs. It is remarkable, that theſe two things are always joined in Scripture. And, indeed, if temporal mercies be conſidered in the light I formerly mentioned, it is impoſſible that they can be aſunder. Let any one conſult the interceſſory prayers in which deliverance from external calamity is intreated, the prophecies in which it is promiſed, or the ſongs of praiſe in which it is celebrated, and he will find, that the purity and ſpiritual proſperity of God's heritage is ſtill kept in view. They are conſidered as involved in one another, and the one, as only valuable, becauſe leading to the other. Inſtead of enumerating many paſſages, I ſhall only mention one of the prophet Iſaiah. "And I "will turn mine hand upon thee, and purely purge away "all thy droſs and take away all thy tin. And I will re- "ſtore thy judges as at the firſt, and thy counſellors as "at the beginning: Afterward thou ſhalt be called the "city of righteouſneſs, the faithful city. Zion ſhall be "redeemed with judgment and her converts with righ- "teouſneſs."

And, my brethren, is not the arm of the Lord and the glory of his power particularly diſplayed, when the influence and dominion of error is deſtroyed, and the obſtinacy and rebellion of ſinners is ſubdued? This is a more extraordinary, as well as a more excellent effect of power, than producing the greateſt changes in our outward ſtate and condition. It ſeems to be on this account that, in Scripture, the Saviour of ſinners, the king of Zion, is ſo often repreſented as glorious in his perſon, and great in his power, "For unto us a child is born, "unto us a ſon is given, and the government ſhall be "upon his ſhoulder, and his name ſhall be called Won- "derful, Counſellor, the mighty God, the everlaſting "Father, the Prince of peace.* Gird thy ſword upon "thy thigh, O moſt Mighty: with thy glory and thy "majeſty. And in thy majeſty ride proſperouſly, becauſe

* Iſaiah, ix. 6.

" of truth and meekneſs and righteouſneſs; and thy right " hand ſhall teach thee terrible things."* Theſe and a multitude of other paſſages plainly ſhow that the converſion of ſinners, and defeating the powers of the princes of darkneſs, requires an exertion, and is a ſignal diſplay of the ſtrength of the divine arms.

But as it is a matter of the utmoſt importance and propriety at preſent, I muſt beg your patience, while I endeavor a little to illuſtrate the neceſſity of joining earneſt interceſſion for the revival of religion and the glory of Chriſt's kingdom, with our prayers for a recovery of national proſperity.

For illuſtrating this let us attend to the three following particulars.

1. We have no warrant to aſk the laſt of theſe without the firſt.

2. We have no reaſon to expect that it will be ſeparately beſtowed.

3. If it ſhould, in any degree, it would not be a bleſſing but a curſe.

Firſt, we have no warrant to aſk national proſperity without a revival of religion. Our prayers are then only warrantable when we adjuſt and proportion our eſteem of the mercies of God to their real worth, and deſire them for their proper ends. Now, a love to one's country, and a deſire of its outward welfare, is, no doubt, an excellent and an amiable diſpoſition. But it is much more ſo to be concerned for their everlaſting intereſt. Why doth the love of our country merit any praiſe, but becauſe it is a diſpoſition and tendency to communicate happineſs? But what is temporal to eternal happineſs? What is a fruitful field to a renewed heart? Peace at home to peace with God? Security from an earthly oppreſſor to deliverance from the wrath to come? A compaſſionate heart bleeds for the miſery of his fellow-creatures in poverty or bondage; but a ſanctified heart is ſtill more deeply affected with the ignorance and guilt of others, and their endleſs conſequences. Now is it a warrantable manner of offering up our deſires to God, to admire or aſk a ſhare in the

* Pſa. xlv. 3, 4.

bounty of his providence, while we deſpiſe and trample upon the riches of his grace?

But that ſuch prayers are unwarrantable, doth not only appear from the unjuſt preference given to leſſer before greater mercies, but from their being a total perverſion of our deſires from the great point in which they ought to centre. The gifts of God are intended to lead us to the giver; the events of his providence to be ſubſervient to the methods of his grace. When, therefore, we aſk temporal proſperity, without an equal, or rather ſuperior ſolicitude for the enlightening and ſanctifying influences of the Holy Ghoſt, we are alienating his mercies from their proper uſe, turning them into weapons of rebellion againſt him, and cheriſhing that love of the world which is deſtructive of the love of God.

Secondly, As all ſuch deſires are unwarrantable and diſorderly, ſo we have no reaſon to expect that they ſhall be granted. Let us recall to mind this important truth, that God is the ſupreme Diſpoſer of all events. Every proſperous event is the effect of his bounty. Every calamity is the rod of his anger, and carries his commiſſion. Are there not then wiſe ends to be ſerved by every thing appointed by him? Affliction ſpringeth not out of the duſt. National calamity is not the rigor of an arbitrary tyrant, but the wiſe chaſtiſement of a gracious father, or the puniſhment of a righteous judge. He ruleth the nations "ſitting upon the throne of his holineſs;" and, unleſs when he hath a mind to "make a full end," of a people ripe for deſtruction, gives them for a ſeaſon into the hands of their enemies to bring about their reformation. If then public calamity bears a commiſſion for this purpoſe from him whoſe work is perfect, what reaſon is there to expect, that it will be removed before it hath attained its end? Will he not repeat the ſtroke, and increaſe its ſeverity, till it procure ſubmiſſion? It is true, we cannot preciſely ſay how far the forbearance of God may go, or how long his patience may endure. There may be a remiſſion, or ſuſpenſion of the final ſtroke, for their farther trial. But it is certain that when there is no returning to God by re-

pentance, there can be no reaſonable ground to hope that his diſpleaſure will ceaſe, or its effects be removed.

Thirdly, Though temporal deliverance were granted to a nation, in any meaſure, without a diſpenſation of the Spirit and revival of religion, it would be no bleſſing but a curſe, and could not be of any long duration. It would be giving them up to themſelves, to fill up the meaſure of their iniquities, that, when the appointed time of vengeance ſhould come, their deſtruction might be more terrible and ſignal. It is remarkable, that this is found among the judgmnets of God, and reckoned one of the moſt dreadful, when he ceaſes to ſtrive with a people, and gives them up to themſelves. Thus he ſays, by the Pſalmiſt, "But "my people would not hearken to my voice, Iſrael would "have none of me, ſo I gave them up to their own hearts "luſts, and they walked in their own counſels."* So alſo ſaith the prophet Hoſea, "Ephraim is joined to idols, let "him alone."† The conſequence of this is the continuance and increaſe of all manner of wickedneſs. Then ſpiritual judgments come in the room of temporal, which, though they are leſs ſenſible, are but ſo much the more fatal. Blindneſs of mind, hardneſs of heart, and an obſtinate contempt of inſtruction, are the uſual conſequences of unſanctified proſperity. In ſuch circumſtances a nation may exult, and bleſs themſelves in their abundant wealth; nay, they may be the envy of their fooliſh and ſhort-ſighted neighbors; but to the eye of faith their condition is moſt wretched and deplorable. To what a pitch of impiety they may proceed when all reſtraints are withdrawn, ſome nations recorded in hiſtory are a ſtanding and melancholy proof. And the ſudden deſolation ſometimes inflicted, after long forbearance, by the Lord of nature, on cities and kingdoms, by fire from heaven, by earthquakes, peſtilence, or the ſword, is a fearful preſage of the fate of all, who, in the day of recompence, ſhall ſuffer the vengeance of eternal fire.

All theſe things are plainly founded on the word of God

* Pſal. lxxxi. 11, 12. † Hoſ. iv. 17.

and manifeſt conſequences of the divine government. They will, however, make very little impreſſion on a thoughtleſs and ſecure generation, plunged in ſenſuality and luſt; and leaſt of all on thoſe, who have expreſsly liſted themſelves under the banner of infidelity, and learned to be profane upon principle. This is one of the worſt ſymptoms of our preſent condition; the greater our guilt, and, therefore, the nearer the danger. Nothing was leſs looked for by the Babylonian monarch, in the height of his riotous midnight feaſt, than his kingdoms being taken from him. And yet how ſpeedily was it accompliſhed, and in how ſhort a time was this ſuperb and opulent city, the "beauty of the Chaldees excellency," turned into a ruinous heap?*

I proceed now to the ſecond general head, which was:

II. To conſider a little the encouragement to prayer, contained in the laſt part of the text: "Awake as in the "ancient days, as in the generations of old," &c.

In this the prophet animates his faith, and encourages his own dependance and that of others upon the promiſes of God, by celebrating the greatneſs of his power, as manifeſted in former memorable deliverances granted to his choſen people. He continues his addreſs to the arm of the Lord: and, inſtead of an enumeration of the mighty acts of this arm in ancient days, and the generations of old, he fixes upon one ſignal and leading diſplay of divine majeſty and power, in the deſtruction of the Egyptians, and the deliverance of Iſrael from that ſubjection and bondage in which they were formerly held by that people. This is done with the higheſt propriety; for the deliverance of Iſrael from Egyptian bondage was moſt remarkable and extraordinary in its circumſtances, and the hand of God did moſt eminently appear in it. Thus the prophet ſays, in the verſe immediately following the text: "Art not thou it, which hath dried the ſea, the waters of "the great deep, that hath made the deeps of the ſea a way "for the ranſomed to paſs over?" From this appearance in behalf of Iſrael, God often takes his deſignation: this chiefly conſtituted the ſpecial relation between him and

* See Iſaiah xiii. 21, to the end.

the people of Iſrael; and on this their obligation to obedience is founded in the preface or introduction to the moral law; "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee "out of the land of Egypt, out of the houſe of bon-"dage." And indeed this deliverance is often conſidered and juſtly, as typical of the ſtill more important deliverance of the elect of God from ſin and miſery.

Now let us conſider a little the effect of ſuch a view upon the mind, and its influence in prayer. This, I think may be included in the two following particulars:

Firſt, it ſatisfies us of the power of God, and his ability to ſave. There can be no prayer addreſſed to God for relief and deliverance in an acceptable manner, but what proceeds upon a confidence in his power. And there is in men, for the moſt part, on this ſubject, a very imperfect and wavering perſuaſion. Nay, there is often a greater degree of unbelief, than they themſelves are ſenſible of, or diſtinctly apprehend. They are often ſo held captive by ſenſe, and their attention ſo much taken up and engroſſed by outward means and inſtruments, that they are backward to believe, or rely even on an almighty, becauſe an inviſible power. This was the caſe often with the children of Iſrael, even after repeated proofs of the ſtrength of the divine arm. Thus ſays the Pſalmiſt: "How oft did "they provoke him in the wilderneſs, and grieve him in "the deſart? Yea, they turned back and tempted God, "and limited the holy One of Iſrael. They remembered "not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from "the enemy."* Againſt this unhappy tendency, God, by the prophet, warns his people, a few verſes after the text: "I, even I, am he that comforteth you; who art "thou, that thou ſhouldſt be afraid of a man that ſhall die, "and of the ſon of man which ſhall be made as graſs. "And forgetteth the Lord thy Maker, that hath ſtretched "forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth? "And haſt feared continually every day, becauſe of the "fury of the oppreſſor, as if he were ready to deſtroy; and "where is the fury of the oppreſſor?"† And indeed nothing can be more ſupporting under ſuch fears, than to

* Pſal. lxxviii. 40, 41, 42. † Iſa. li. 12, 13.

remember the inſtances in which God hath formerly made his power known. It is, as it were, realizing the divine perfections, and making us to ſee him who is inviſible. In this very way does the Pſalmiſt recover from a diſconſolate ſtate, and dark diſcouraging views of divine providence. "Hath God forgotten to be gracious; hath he in anger "ſhut up his tender mercies? Selah. And I ſaid, this is "my infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right "hand of the moſt High. I will remember the works "of the Lord; ſurely I will remember thy wonders of "old. I will meditate alſo of all thy works, and talk of thy "doings."*

In the ſecond place, the ſame view ſerves to aſcertain us of the mercy of God, and his readineſs to help us in diſtreſs. It is not enough that we have ever ſo unſhaken a perſuaſion of the power of God, unleſs we have ſome ground to believe that it ſhall appear in our behalf. Now former inſtances of extraordinary providential deliverance not only afford a proof of divine power, but ſhew us in what caſes we have reaſon to expect that it ſhall be exerted. That part of the providence of God which is already open to our view, enables us, from analogy, to infer what ſhall be his ſubſequent conduct; at leaſt ſo far as to direct and encourage us in our own duty. We know for example, that he is a refuge in times of trouble to thoſe that are in diſtreſs: and that in extremity, when all human help fails, then is deliverance more to the glory of God. By this very argument does Jehoſhaphat conclude and enforce his prayer. "O our God, wilt thou not judge "them? for we have no might againſt this great company "that cometh againſt us; neither know we what to do, "but our eyes are upon thee."†

We know alſo that his faithfulneſs is engaged to hear thoſe, who, refuſing to lean on any broken reed, or truſting any refuge of lies, place their confidence in him alone; and that the glory of God is immediately and chiefly concerned, in the ſupport and preſervation of his own people. They ſee that he hath, in all ages, counted this his own cauſe; and therefore they ſay with the Pſalmiſt:

* Pſal. lxxvii. 9, 10, 11, 12. † 2 Chron. xx. 12.

"They that know thy name will put their truſt in thee, "for thou Lord haſt not forſaken them that ſeek thee."* In fine, former inſtances of extraordinary deliverance point out the great end and deſign of ſuch interpoſitions. That they are for promoting of truth and righteouſneſs, and to make thoſe who are the objects of them, chearful and willing ſervants to God; not only partakers of the bounty of his providence, but monuments of the riches of his grace. "In that day ſhall this ſong be ſung in the land "of Judah. We have a ſtrong city, ſalvation will God "appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, "that the righteous nation, that keepeth the truth may en- "ter in.† Violence ſhall no more be heard in thy land, "waſting and deſtruction within thy borders; but thou "ſhalt call thy walls ſalvation and thy gates praiſe."‡ From all which it appears that, in prayer properly warranted, and rightly directed, it muſt give unſpeakable confidence and hope, to ſurvey the remarkable inſtances of divine providence, and thence take encouragement to commit our cauſe to, and reſt our hope on, the ſame unchangeable God.

I conclude this head with obſerving, That in the expreſſion of the prophet, "Art thou not it that hath cut "Rahab and wounded the dragon," he hath a particular view to the eternity and immutability of God. "He is "the ſame yeſterday, to-day, and forever." If he hath done great and marvellous things in the moſt diſtant ages, "his hand is not ſhortened that it cannot ſave, neither his "ear heavy that it cannot hear;" his ſtrength is not impaired by exerciſe, nor his fulneſs waſted by communication. Such an argument would not hold with regard to man, whoſe power is ſo exceeding mutable, and his ſtrength ſo exceeding liable to decay. It is recorded in hiſtory, that an old Roman, Milo, who in his youth was a prodigy of ſtrength, happened to live to old age; and that he uſed often to weep when he looked on his arms, his once nervous and vigorous arms, and ſaw the wrinkled and decayed ſinews, and the weak, feeble ſtate to which they were reduced by time. But this is not, cannot be

* Pſ. ix. 10. † Iſ. xxvi. 1, 2. ‡ Iſ. lx 18.

the caſe with the arm of the Lord. His ſtrength and ſtability, particularly as oppoſed to created weakneſs and frailty, is often declared in Scripture. Thus in the following ſublime paſſage of the prophet Iſaiah. "And the "voice ſaid, Cry. And he ſaid what ſhall I cry? All "fleſh is graſs, and all the goodlineſs thereof is as the flow-"er of the field. The graſs withereth, the flower fadeth; "becauſe the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: ſurely "the people is graſs. The graſs withereth, the flower fa-"deth: but the word of our God ſhall ſtand forever."*

I proceed now in the laſt place to apply the truths you have heard on this ſubject to our own preſent ſituation, as to public affairs.

And firſt. Is not our ſtate, both as a nation, and as a church, exceedingly fallen and low; and have we not the greateſt need to addreſs this prayer in the text, "Awake, "awake, put on ſtrength, O arm of the Lord?" May we not take our low and fallen ſtate as a nation from the univerſal confeſſion of all without exception, however oppoſed in ſentiments or intereſt? Every claſs and denomination of men among us, every party and faction, however unwilling each may be to acknowledge its own ſhare of the guilt, and however prone to load its adverſaries with the blame of procuring it, is yet willing to acknowledge that we are at preſent in a diſtreſſed, and in a contemptible ſtate.

And indeed the thing itſelf ſpeaks. We have of late ſuffered under a variety of public ſtrokes. We have not only had, for ſome time paſt, repeated threatenings of ſcarcity and dearth, but vaſt multitudes have been afflicted with famine in its rigor, which is one of God's "ſore "judgments." Through the mercy of God this is alleviated in ſome meaſure at preſent, but far from being entirely removed. We have alſo been long engaged in war with a powerful and politic enemy. And has not the providence of God ſenſibly frowned on us, and viſibly fruſtrated almoſt every one of our attempts? This hath been the caſe to a degree hardly known in any former inſtance. We have "turned our backs faint-hearted before our ene-

* Iſ. xl. 6.

"mies," in almoſt every encounter; and the greater and more formidable our preparations for any enterprize, the more pitiful the iſſue, and the more ſhameful our defeat and diſappointment. Has there not been an obſtructed trade, a loſs of territory, a loſs of honor, and expence of treaſure? Is not this nation, once in a manner the arbitreſs of the fate of Europe, now become the ſcorn and deriſion of her neighbors and all that are round about her? What weak and divided councils among thoſe that preſide? Inſtead of any genuine public ſpirit, a proud and factious endeavor to diſgrace each other's meaſures, and wreſt the enſigns of government out of each other's hands. How numerous and expenſive, but how uſeleſs and inactive have been our fleets and armies? And how deplorable is the condition of our colonies abroad? They are the chief theatre of the war, becauſe, indeed, they are the ſubject of the conteſt. And ſurely it is affecting to think of the unnatural barbarity and cruelty that there is often exerciſed, when no age or ſex is ſpared. It is true, the diſtance of the place may probably make us leſs ſenſible of their miſery. But if it pleaſe God to ſuffer our enemies to continue their progreſs, it is hard to ſay how far the deſolation may extend, or how univerſal it may prove.

Are we not alſo in a very low and fallen ſtate as a church, or a nation, ſtill retaining ſome profeſſion and form of religion? This will be found to correſpond with the other, as the cauſe with the effect. How have all ranks, from the higheſt to the loweſt, corrupted their ways? How groſs and prevalent is infidelity, undermining the principles of natural, with the ſame zeal and eagerneſs, with which it formerly endeavored to weaken the foundations of revealed religion? How many of high rank have wholly deſerted the houſe and worſhip of God, nay, openly and boldly treat his ſervice and ſervants with contempt? How often do we obſerve ſuch, with a criminal and inſolent ſelf-contradiction, trample upon the very laws againſt profaneneſs which they contribute to make? And, with how much zeal and diligence does the lower part of the nation emulate the higher, in that which is the reproach of both? So great is the preva-

lence of irreligion, contempt of God, ſenſuality and pride, that many of the groſſeſt crimes are not only practiſed but profeſſed, not only frequent but open, not only perſiſted in but gloried in and boaſted of: inſomuch, that it requires no ſmall degree of fortitude and reſolution, ſtedfaſtly to adhere to the principles and character of a diſciple of Chriſt, in oppoſition to the ſpirit and ſtrain of faſhionable converſation.

It is not, indeed, to be wondered at, that not only this nation, but the proteſtant ſtates of Europe in general ſhould be brought under the rod, as they have ſo ſhamefully departed from that purity of faith and ſtrictneſs of morals which was the glory of the reformation. How many have of late been aſhamed of the croſs of Chriſt, and the doctrine of the grace of God? And what hath been ſubſtituted in their room? A pliant and faſhionable ſcheme of religion, a fine theory of virtue and morality. A beautiful but unſubſtantial idol, raiſed by human pride, adorned and dreſſed by human art, and ſupported by the wiſdom of words. And hath it not, in this, as in every preceding age, in this, as in every other chriſtian country, wherever it gained any credit, been the fore-runner and brought faſt at its heels a deluge of profaneneſs and immorality in practice? Can any of theſe things be called in queſtion? And are not they, as well as many more which might eaſily be enumerated, the melancholy proofs of our degenerate and corrupt character?

In the ſecond place. From what hath been ſaid you may ſee what wrong meaſures we have hitherto taken for removing theſe evils, ſo far as we have been ſenſible of them. Our gracious ſovereign hath, indeed, been pleaſed to point out our duty, by calling us annually to faſting and humiliation. But with the far greater number it hath been no more than an unmeaning and lifeleſs form: and they have continued ſtill in the ſame forgetfulneſs and contempt of God. You have heard above that nothing is more contrary to the genuine ſpirit of interceſſory prayer in public calamity, than putting truſt in an arm of fleſh. And yet, is there any thing with which this nation is at preſent more juſtly chargeable? Nothing is more appa-

rent from the very face of our common channels of intelligence. In the caſe of diſappointments, on the one hand, are we not ungovernable and head ſtrong in our reſentment againſt men? and equally fooliſh and ſanguine on the other, in our hopes of thoſe who are ſubſtituted in their place? We give pompous details of armaments, and prophecy, nay, even in a manner deſcribe their victories, long before the ſeaſon of action; and incautiouſly celebrate the characters of leaders, while they are only putting on the harneſs, and going into the field. What proud and arrogant ſentiments do we often expreſs on the ſubject of our national courage, and ancient Britiſh fire, as it is called? In ſhort, we ſeem to have got entirely into that vain-glorious, oſtentatious ſyſtem, with which we uſed to upbraid our neighbor and rival nation; and they ſeem to have given it up in our favor, and to have adopted the wiſer and more profitable method of putting deeds for words.

And how negligent have we been of promoting, or praying for the intereſt of religion? You have heard, that when the arm of the Lord puts on ſtrength, it muſt be to appoint ſalvation for walls and bulwarks to a people. But how few diſcover any concern upon this ſubject? The want of public ſpirit, in thoſe who retain any ſenſe of religion, is an evidence of its low and languiſhing ſtate. When it is lively, it will always be communicative. Love to God and love to man, the two great branches of practical religion, neceſſarily imply a concern for its progreſs. And yet, ſo rare is any thing of this kind, that when it appears as a ſort of prodigy, it is looked upon, by moſt, as romance and extravagance. Let experience tell, if this is not often the caſe. When any one appears, in imitation of the Scripture ſaints, to grieve for the ſins of others, or diſcovers any more than ordinary concern for their reformation, are not all his endeavors immediately reſiſted and reſented as troubleſome, or branded with every name of contempt, as viſionary frenzy and enthuſiaſm?

In the third place. From what hath been ſaid on this ſubject, you may learn what ought to be the great aim

of every ſerious and ſenſible Chriſtian among us, at preſent in his interceſſion at the throne of grace, viz. That the power of the Almighty may appear in behalf of this nation, in ſuch a manner, as all may be obliged to ſay, "This is the doing of the Lord." That, as he uſeth to do on extraordinary occaſions, he may raiſe up inſtruments for this purpoſe, who may be as poliſhed ſhafts in his own hand, and may have a ſingle eye to his own glory. That not for our ſakes, who have deſerved to be caſt off for ever, but for his own name's ſake, he would ſupport thoſe who ſtill adhere to the proteſtant cauſe. And, in a particular manner, for this end, that he would diſcover his power and glory in an eminent and remarkable revival of religion among all ranks. That our bleſſed Redeemer, the king of Zion, who reigns to all generations, who hath aſcended up on high, and received gifts for men, would ſend forth his Spirit in a large and plentiful meaſure. That his work and power may appear in all his gracious influences, convincing and converting ſinners, ſanctifying, quickening and comforting believers. That this may be a common bleſſing on all corners of the land, on perſons of every claſs and denomination, of every rank and degree, from the higheſt to the loweſt, of every ſtation and office, civil and ſacred. Above all, that he would "cloath his prieſts with ſalvation, that his ſaints "may ſhout aloud for joy." O when ſhall the time come, when "the Lord of hoſts ſhall be for a crown of "glory, and a diadem of beauty to the reſidue of his peo-"ple;" when, inſtead of fine ſchemes ſpun for the honor of their makers, thoſe who are called miniſters of Chriſt, ſhall preach the goſpel, "with the Holy Ghoſt ſent down "from Heaven?" When the truth of God, by its ſimplicity, majeſty, force, and efficacy, ſhall make its way into the hearts of the moſt obſtinate, and Satan's kingdom fall as lightning before it. Plead, my beloved hearers, that proteſtants in general may be brought back to their firſt faith and their firſt love; that the unhappy diviſions among us may be aboliſhed; and that the bond and centre of union may be Chriſt crucified, the only author of ſalvation: that men may be no longer ranked in par-

ties, and marſhalled under names, but the great and only ſtrife may be, who ſhall love our Redeemer moſt, and who ſhall ſerve him with the greateſt zeal.

And in this critical conjuncture, when the bloody ſword is threatening ſo many nations, and when there is ſo general a combination of anti-chriſtian powers, be earneſt in prayer, that it may pleaſe God to ſubvert their ſchemes, and turn their counſels into fooliſhneſs; and that he, with whom is terrible majeſty, may conſume "the man of ſin with the ſpirit of his mouth, and de-"ſtroy him with the brightneſs of his coming."—Pray for our gracious ſovereign king George, under whoſe mild and legal government, we have long enjoyed as much happineſs as our national guilt would allow: that God, by whom "kings reign and princes decree juſtice," would give him a wiſe underſtanding heart in his fear, protect his perſon, direct his councils, and proſper his arms: and long preſerve his numerous iſſue, as happy pledges of the ſecurity of our civil and religious liberty. Let us alſo, while we give thanks to God for raiſing up an eminent prince in Germany as the head of the reformed intereſt, and ſignally ſupporting him hitherto, pray, that he may continue his protection to him, encourage his heart, and ſtrengthen his hands, and fight his battles. In fine, let us pray for the ſpeedy accompliſhment of the prophecy, whoever ſhall be the inſtrument of it, of the downfall of Antichriſt, when the cry ſhall be heard, "Ba-"bylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and ſhall ariſe no "more."

In the laſt place. For our encouragement in this duty, let us remember, that we ſerve an unchangeable God, the rock of ages. We pray for the appearance of the arm of the Lord "as in ancient days, in the generations "of old," when it "cut Rahab and wounded the dragon." Review the hiſtory of his conduct to the church and people of Iſrael, how, with a mighty hand and out-ſtretched arm, he delivered them from bondage, and humbled their proud oppreſſors. And remember how often, in ſucceeding ages, he has appeared in behalf of his own people, and ſupported his own cauſe when at the very low-

eſt, and as it were in an expiring ſtate. How low was the intereſt of Zion at the reformation, when all the kings of the earth ſerved the "ſcarlet whore," and "were drunk "with the wine of the wrath of her fornication?" How thick the darkneſs that overſpread the nations, and how univerſal the dominion of error? And yet, in oppoſition to all the cunning of earthly policy, in oppoſition to all the fury of perſecuting cruelty, he enabled a few plain men, lovers of the truth, to aſſert, to defend and to ſpread it.

The moſt remarkable times of the revival of religion, in this part of the united kingdom, immediately ſucceeded times of the greateſt apoſtacy, when truth ſeemed to be fallen in the ſtreets, and equity could not enter. This was the caſe immediately before the year 1638. Corruption in doctrine, looſeneſs in practice, and ſlaviſh ſubmiſſion in politics, had overſpread the church of Scotland. And yet, in a little time, ſhe appeared in greater purity, and in greater dignity, than ever ſhe had done before, or perhaps than ever ſhe hath done ſince, that period. In the ſame manner, immediately before the happy revolution, how deſperate in appearance was the ſituation of this church? When all the beſt, as well as many of the nobleſt perſons in the nation, were chaſed as fugitives from their dwellings and conſidered as unworthy of an abode on earth! When many of our worthy anceſtors fell in battle, died on a ſcaffold, or were murdered in the fields by the unrelenting rage of eccleſiaſtic tyranny. And when worſhipping the Lord God of our fathers, according to his own word, was a capital crime! Yet our captivity was brought back, and "we were as men that dreamed," ſo unexpected was the mercy.

Let no Chriſtian therefore give way to deſponding thoughts. Though infidelity unreſiſted ſpreads its poiſon, though profaneneſs and enmity to religion and ſerioufneſs every where abound, though there are few to ſupport the intereſt of truth and righteouſneſs, though we have ſeen a new thing on the earth, a miniſter of Chriſt leaving the pulpit for the ſtage, let us not be diſcouraged. We plead the cauſe that ſhall finally prevail. Religion ſhall riſe from it ruins; and its oppreſſed ſtate at preſent ſhould not

only excite us to pray, but encourage us to hope for its ſpeedy revival. While every one is diligent in his own ſphere, and in his proper duty, and earneſtly pleading for the revelation of the arm of the Lord, let us recollect his favor and protection to the church in every time of need, and his faithfulneſs which is to all generations. Let us ſay with the Pſalmiſt, " Walk about Zion, " and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark " ye well her bulwarks, conſider her palaces; that ye may " tell it to the generation following. For this God is " our God for ever and ever, he will be our guide even " unto death."*

* Pſ. xlviii. 12, 13, 14.

The NATURE and EXTENT of VISIBLE RELIGION.

A

SERMON.

MATTH. v. 16.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.

THERE are two different diviſions frequently made of practical religion. One, into our duty to God, and our duty to man. Not as though every part of our duty were not to be ultimately referred to God, and to be done from a regard to his authority enjoining it; but becauſe there are ſome duties, of the performance of which the Lord our maker, and ſome of which our neighbor is the immediate object. Another common diviſion is into the hidden and the apparent part; the inward frame and temper of the mind, and the outward life and converſation. Theſe two diviſions, though they are near a-kin to one another, and often by indiſtinct ſpeakers in a great meaſure confounded, yet are by no means one and the ſame; and when the difference is not ſufficiently attended to, it is followed by many bad conſequences. It is undeniable that God is chiefly delighted with truth in the inward parts; yet there are many of the duties we owe to God, which ought to have an outward expreſſion, which without it will not be acceptable to him, but which are greatly neglected by thoſe who imagine that a good life and converſation implies no more than the performance

of a few of the moſt obvious and neceſſary ſocial virtues. The truth is, there are few things that ſeem to be leſs underſtood than the nature, extent, and obligation of viſible religion. Some lean to one extreme, and ſome to another. Reproaches are mutually thrown upon one another. Some are blamed for too much profeſſion; and they are ready to retort the charge, and blame their accuſers with at leaſt equal juſtice, for too little, or none at all. In the mean time there are too few of any ſort who have ſuch a conduct and character as really adorns the doctrine of their Saviour, and ſerves for the inſtruction of ſinners, or the edification and comfort of thoſe who fear God. For this reaſon I have choſen to inſiſt a little upon theſe words of our Saviour to his diſciples, in his excellent ſermon on the mount, "Let your light ſo ſhine before men, that "they may ſee your good works, and glorify your Father "which is in heaven."

I am ſenſible that ſome, and particularly one commentator of great eminence, underſtand theſe words as addreſſed only, or chiefly, to the twelve apoſtles; and that by light is to be underſtood their doctrine, which they were to let, or to ſuffer to ſhine; freely to communicate, as they had freely received it. This they preſume to have been intended, in oppoſition to the Heathen philoſophers and the Jewiſh teachers, who confined their inſtructions to their ſchools, and imparted what they eſteemed their moſt valuable diſcoveries only to a few ſelect diſciples. To ſupport this interpretation, it is alledged, that the metaphor of light is conſtantly uſed in Scripture to ſignify knowledge; and that of darkneſs, ignorance. But though this be the primary intention of the metaphor, it is ſurely ſometimes carried on to expreſs the effects of knowledge; and not only walking in the light (as 1 John i. 7.) but ſhining as lights in the world, (as in Phil. ii. 15.) an expreſſion almoſt the ſame with that in our text, is uſed to ſignify holineſs of life. Beſides, I do not think the above interpretation can be made, without ſome conſtraint, to agree with the expreſſion in the laſt part of the verſe, "that they may ſee your good works." I underſtand the words, therefore, as originally addreſſed to all who then heard our Lord's

diſcourſe, and now to all profeſſing Chriſtians; and by the expreſſion, "Let your light ſo ſhine before men, that they "may ſee your good works;" that the holineſs and purity of their converſation ſhould be viſible and eminent; that men, by obſerving it, might be conſtrained to acknowledge the truth and power of the principles which produced it, and perſuaded to yield themſelves alſo to their government.

In diſcourſing upon this ſubject, what I propoſe, through divine aſſiſtance, is, 1. To illuſtrate the meaning and extent of the exhortation, *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works:* 2. To illuſtrate the motives with which it is enforced, as they are contained n the text, the glory of God, and the good of others: And, in the laſt place, to make ſome practical improvement of what may be ſaid.

I. In the firſt place, then, let us conſider the extent and meaning of the exhortation, "Let your light ſo ſhine "before men, that they may ſee your good works." This, in general, includes the whole of viſible religion; every part of the duty of a Chriſtian, to which his neighbors are or may be witneſſes. And here it is of importance to obſerve, that though the inward temper of the mind is not in itſelf and immediately the object of human obſervation; and though there may be, and there is, much hypocriſy in the world; yet every diſpoſition of the heart hath a natural and genuine expreſſion, and may be more clearly or more obſcurely diſcerned by ſome outward ſymptoms. There are therefore few groſſer miſtakes than to ſuppoſe, either that no concluſions will, or that none ought, to be drawn by the world about us, concerning our inward diſpoſitions, from our outward carriage. So eſtabliſhed is the connection between them, that hypocrites are uſually much more ſucceſsful in deceiving themſelves than the world. On the other hand, thoſe who, from a real or pretended fear of the imputation of hypocriſy, put off all outward appearances of devotion, and abſtain from all expreſſions of the inward exerciſe of their ſouls, will hardly perſuade any

impartial perſon, that the hidden ſource is ſtrong and plentiful, when the ſtreams which ſhould iſſue from it are ſo eaſily concealed. Other natural affections of the mind, as ſorrow, anger, and joy, do immediately diſcover themſelves in the countenance and carriage; and though they may be reſtrained and moderated, can ſcarcely be wholly or long concealed: Why then ſhould it be otherwiſe with religious affections, which are at leaſt as juſt in their nature, and much more noble in their object? I am afraid we may ſay, with too much truth, that there is but little real religion in the world at preſent; and yet even that little is often, in a moſt ſhameful and cowardly manner, diſſembled or denied.

But becauſe the impreſſion of general truths is but ſeldom ſtrong or laſting, I ſhall add a few particular obſervations, for opening the meaning and extent of this exhortation, *Let your light ſhine before men.*——And, in the *firſt* place, If you would make your light to ſhine before the world, you muſt be careful of the practice of ſuch duties as are moſt *rare* and *uncommon*; and that whether their being ſo ariſes from the difficulty of the duties themſelves, or from the peculiar degeneracy and contrary practice of any particular age or place. The metaphor itſelf will teach you this. Nothing can be ſaid to ſhine, but that which throws out a diſtinguiſhed luſtre, in compariſon of other objects. Thoſe who are but as other men, and do no way excel the world about them, cannot poſſibly bring any honor to their profeſſion, or be properly ſaid to make their light to ſhine. Thus our Saviour argues, in recommending a very rare and eminent virtue,* "But "I ſay unto you, Love your enemies, bleſs them that "curſe you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for "them which deſpitefully uſe you, and perſecute you.— "For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? "do not even the publicans the ſame? And if ye ſalute "your brethren only, what do ye more than others?"

I obſerved, in entering upon this particular, that the practice of ſome duties may be uncommon, either from the difficulty of the duties themſelves, or the peculiar de-

* Matth. v. 44, 46, 47.

generacy of any particular age or place. The firſt of theſe happens in all thoſe caſes in which the law of God, from its purity and ſpirituality, is moſt immediately contrary to the bent of carnal affection. For though it be true in general, as the apoſtle Paul tells us,* that "the carnal "mind is enmity againſt God; for it is not ſubject to the "law of God; neither indeed can be;" yet this enmity is much ſtronger in ſome caſes than in others. Some of thoſe gracious diſpoſitions which ſhone in the man Chriſt Jeſus when he dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, and which he ſo ardently recommends, ſuch as, contempt of the world, and heavenlineſs of mind, meekneſs, humility, the forgiveneſs of injuries, and the love of our enemies, are much more oppoſite to the tendency of corrupt nature than ſome other parts of the moral law. Or, to ſpeak more properly, it is only by an obedience to the will of God, carried to this degree, and manifeſtly flowing from ſuch principles, and ſuch an inward temper, that we can make our light to ſhine in the view of an obſerving world.

I took notice alſo, that whether any duty be difficult or eaſy in itſelf, if it is neglected, or brought into contempt, by the peculiar degeneracy of any age or place, he who would make his light to ſhine before men, muſt, with boldneſs and reſolution, with ſtedfaſtneſs and conſtancy, adhere to the practice of it. If in any place, or in any age, the very outward attendance upon the ordinances of Chriſt's inſtitution is made light of, or deſpiſed, by many of every rank; if the name of God is profaned and abuſed by unholy converſation; it is then the duty of every real ſervant of God, publicly to manifeſt his eſteem and love for divine ordinances, and to maintain the higheſt reverence for the holy name of God in his diſcourſe and language. And, if I am not miſtaken, the very meaning of making our light to ſhine before men, is, to be doubly watchful in all ſuch caſes, not only on our own account, but upon account of others; or, as our Saviour expreſſed it, that they may ſee our good works: For inſtance, not only to eſteem the inſtitutions of Chriſt in the goſpel, for their tendency to promote our ſanctification

* Rom. viii. 7.

and comfort, but even when theſe purpoſes might be at leaſt as well obtained in another way, at particular times; yet to attend carefully upon public ordinances, that we may contribute our part to preſerve the reſpect that is due to them: or, in the other caſe ſuppoſed, when profane ſwearing is common and prevalent, to diſcover the deeper reverence for the holy name of God, and uſe the utmoſt caution in the whole of our converſation, to avoid every doubtful expreſſion, or any thing that may have a tendency to inſnare the unwary, or confirm the wicked in an evil courſe. You will probably conclude, that my mentioning theſe two inſtances ariſes from a perſuaſion that theſe ſins prevail remarkably among us in the preſent age, and your concluſion is juſt. I ſhall add one more to them, viz. voluptuouſneſs; either exceſſive ſenſuality and intemperance, or at leaſt a pleaſing of the fleſh, with a total neglect of mortification and ſelf-denial. And be aſſured, my brethren, you are particularly called upon, by the exhortation in the text, in theſe and every other inſtance of the like kind, not to loſe your horror of ſin by the frequency of it, but, according to the exhortation of the apoſtle Paul,* to be "blameleſs and harmleſs, the "ſons of God, without rebuke, in the midſt of a crooked "and perverſe nation, among whom ye ſhine as lights in "the world."

In the ſecond place, In order to make your light ſhine before men, you muſt act an unexceptionable part in all ſuch caſes as your conduct falls moſt *immediately*, and moſt *fully*, under the *obſervation* of others. I have ſaid above, that the exhortation, in its full extent, includes the whole of viſible religion. But there are ſome caſes in which our conduct is comparatively more viſible than in others, and more immediately ſubjected to the examination of the world. As there are ſome places more conſpicuous and expoſed to public view than others, ſo are there alſo ſome perſons in the whole of their deportment, and ſome actions of the ſame perſons. It is the laſt of theſe that chiefly relates to my preſent ſubject. Are you not ſenſible then, that in thoſe actions which fall moſt

* Phil. ii. 15.

immediately under the obſervation of others, the greateſt caution and circumſpection is neceſſary? It is from theſe that the judgment of men is chiefly formed of profeſſing Chriſtians, and the character fixed which they muſt bear in the world. With reſpect to other actions, men proceed more upon conjecture, and therefore will not, even themſelves, lay ſo much ſtreſs upon their obſervations; but in ſuch as are wholly ſubjected to their view, their concluſions are peremptory. If you aſk, what are thoſe actions that fall moſt immediately under the obſervation of others? I anſwer, they are many. Moſt of thoſe of which our neighbor is the object; particularly all relative duties, and alſo the government of the tongue. Although thoſe who are converſant with you, may make ſhrewd gueſſes, by what they ſee in your outward deportment, whether you are conſtant in ſecret devotion, or ſerious and fervent in public, they muſt ſtill labor under much uncertainty. But a neighbor will quickly and certainly know, whether you are friendly or ſelfiſh, froward or peaceable; a wife muſt know, whether ſhe hath an affectionate huſband, and a huſband whether he hath a dutiful wife; a ſervant muſt know, whether he is under a reaſonable and gentle, or a capricious and cruel maſter; and a maſter, whether he hath a ſubmiſſive and diligent, or an idle and ſlothful ſervant. The ſame thing holds with reſpect to every other relation. And as to the government of the tongue, the world muſt know whether your converſation is pure and inoffenſive at all times, and profitable, as opportunities preſent themſelves; or if it is frothy, unprofitable and vain, raſh, peeviſh, paſſionate, unchaſte, or cenſorious. As therefore, in the language of our Saviour, a city that is ſet on an hill cannot be hid; ſo a Chriſtian, in theſe caſes, cannot be concealed. And I hope I may be allowed to ſay, without being thought to put the ſhadow of religion for the ſubſtance, or prefering the form to the ſpirit, that he ought, in all ſuch caſes, to be particularly watchful that nothing may eſcape him, which may, in its conſequences, tend to the hiſhonor of God, or the ruin of the ſouls of men.

In the third place, In order to make your light to ſhine before men, you muſt be careful in the diſcharge of ſuch duties as are moſt *acceptable* to others. It is ſelf-evident, that if there are ſome of the duties which we owe to our neighbors more acceptable to them than others, nothing will more recommend religion to their eſteem, which is the deſign of a ſhining converſation, than the faithful diſcharge of ſuch duties. Now, that there are ſome duties more acceptable to mankind than others, is very evident; and none will call it in queſtion, who reflect upon the different reception given to thoſe duties which promote men's temporal intereſt, and thoſe which reſtrain or puniſh their crimes. The one claſs of theſe procures the love and eſteem of all without exception, whether good or bad; the other often provokes the reſentment and inflames the paſſions of the vicious, who make ſo great a part of the world. Reflect alſo what a different reception is uſually given to a covetous hard hearted oppreſſor, or to a fraudulent unjuſt man, on the one hand; and to a profane ſwearer, a drunkard, or deſpiſer of religion, on the other. The firſt is hated and fled from by all; the laſt is freely careſſed by many, and indeed often by thoſe from whoſe profeſſion a more equal and impartial deteſtation of vice and wickedneſs might have been expected. This is eaſily to be accounted for, if we conſider that worldly intereſt is the idol of by far the greateſt part of men, and that there is too ſtrong a bias to it in the very beſt.

From this it is plain, that he who would make his light to ſhine before others, muſt be extremely careful of ſuch duties as are moſt acceptable to them, particularly juſtice and integrity in all his dealings; and ſuch juſtice as, if poſſible, may be beyond diſpute, and to the conviction of all. There was a very great beauty and dignity in the language of Samuel to the children of Iſrael, when he was able to appeal to themſelves, as to the unblameableneſs of his conduct among them in a public ſtation: "*Behold, "here I am, witneſs againſt me before the Lord, and be"fore his anointed: whoſe ox have I taken? or whoſe

* 1 Sam. xii. 3.

" aſs have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom " have I oppreſſed? or of whoſe hand have I received any " bribe to blind my eyes therewith? and I will reſtore it " unto you. And they ſaid, Thou haſt not defrauded us, " nor oppreſſed us, neither haſt thou taken ought of any " man's hand." Mercy and charity alſo to thoſe in diſtreſs is univerſally acceptable: this is ſtill more acceptable to mankind in general than juſtice alone. The reaſon is, they think they have a claim to juſtice, and, in many caſes, can obtain it by compulſion, when it is not willingly given them. Beſides, that worldly wiſdom may eaſily be conceived the principle of juſt dealings, through fear of a diſcovery, and its conſequences: but charity and compaſſion to the neceſſities of others, is looked upon as the free unconſtrained exertion of good diſpoſitions. The apoſtle Paul ſuppoſes a difference in the eſtimation of the world, between a merely righteous or juſt man, and a good or merciful man, when he ſays,* " for ſcarcely for a righte- " ous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man " ſome would even dare to die."

The ſame ſelfiſh bias in men to their worldly intereſt will indeed ſometimes carry them ſo far, as to make them exceſſive and unreaſonable in their expectations. The world ſeems not only to expect, that thoſe who profeſs to fear God ſhould be juſt and upright in their dealings, merciful and charitable to proper objects; but that they ſhould be at all times ready to yield up their own rights to the extravagant demands of worldly men, and give ſuch evidences of ſelf-denial, as are neither conſiſtent with wiſdom nor with piety. Theſe exceſſive expectations of the world, which it is found by experience impoſſible to gratify, are too apt to make ſome, in peeviſhneſs and diſpleaſure, throw up all hopes of, or endeavors after, avoiding its reproaches. This is to diſobey God, becauſe it is impoſſible perfectly to pleaſe men. The more ready they are to take offence without reaſon, the more watchful ought the conſcientious Chriſtian to be, that he may give no juſt ground for it. And undoubtedly the private example, or

* Rom. v. 7.

the public endeavors of any perſon for reformation, bid much fairer for ſucceſs, when his conduct is ſuch in the particulars above-mentioned, as the world in general muſt confeſs to be amiable and excellent.

I ſhall only add one conſideration more to ſhew the neceſſity or propriety of ſhining in ſuch duties as are moſt acceptable to others. It is, that uſually the looſe or profane part of the world, in order to prevent or wipe off in ſome meaſure, the reproach which their conduct, in other inſtances, brings upon them, pretend to glory in the juſtneſs of their dealings, their generoſity and charity; and this often not without inſinuations, that thoſe who appear to be religious, are not ſo ſtrict in point of moral honeſty. It is therefore incumbent on every ſervant of God to make his practice a continual and viſible refutation of this calumny; and to ſhew, that none can, to ſuch perfection, diſcharge any moral duty whatever, as thoſe who are renewed in the ſpirit of their minds, and having the love of God ſhed abroad in their hearts, muſt of conſequence love their brethren alſo.

In the fourth and laſt place, If you would make your light ſhine before men, you muſt be diligent in the practice of ſuch duties as are moſt profitable to others. It will not be difficult to determine, what are the duties moſt profitable to others, if we only conſider what has the moſt immediate tendency to promote their ſpiritual and eternal intereſt. Of this kind, there are many incumbent on perſons of every ſtation, and in every ſituation of life; though the obligation of them is little thought of, for the moſt part, and the practice generally neglected: ſuch as, private and perſonal inſtruction, tender and affectionate counſel, faithful admonition and reproof. Every one of us knows the perſons to whom his influence extends, when any ſcheme for his worldly intereſt and advancement, or that of his friends, or the power and credit of his party, is at ſtake; but few think of uſing the ſame intereſt for the glory of God, and the ſalvation of deluded ſinners.

Of this kind are all the duties of ſuperiors to their inferiors; as parents and heads of families, teachers of youth, miniſters of the goſpel, magiſtrates and rulers. Theſe every

one, in their ſeveral capacities, are obliged, either more directly, or by conſequence, to promote the everlaſting intereſt of thoſe who are under them; and nothing will make their light more to ſhine, nothing will contribute more to adorn and illuſtrate their Chriſtian character, than a faithful, zealous, and diligent diſcharge of the duties of theſe ſtations.

Perhaps it may be thought, that the reaſoning on the former particular is contrary to this; and that if theſe duties, which are acceptable to others, make a Chriſtian's converſation to ſhine, the practice of ſuch as men are averſe from ſubmitting to, muſt have an oppoſite effect. But this is far from being the caſe: for though ſome ſins are contrary to other ſins, religion is conſiſtent throughout; and every part of it, inſtead of obſcuring, throws a luſtre upon another. This will eaſily appear, if you conſider, that however unwilling men are to be inſtructed in their duty, or reſtrained and limited from their irregular indulgence; ſo ſoon as the endeavors uſed for that purpoſe are ſuccefsful, they will, with the higheſt thankfulneſs, acknowledge the care beſtowed upon them. Though a child may, at firſt, and for ſome time, be impatient of the father's authority; if it is attended with ſucceſs, he will ever afterwards reckon it one of the greateſt bleſſings of his life; and the memory of ſuch a parent will be infinitely more dear, than of one who has ſhown the moſt partial and indulgent fondneſs.

Further, ſuch duties, though they may be harſh and unpleaſant to thoſe who are the immediate objects of them; yet as they are unqueſtionably good and uſeful in themſelves, they muſt command the eſteem and approbation of every impartial obſerver. It is indeed by this means alone, or chiefly, that the public honor and credit of religion is preſerved, amongſt ſo great a majority who are enemies to it in their hearts. What they would hate and reſiſt, or perhaps revile, in their own caſe; when others are concerned, conſcience conſtrains them to bear a clear and ſtrong teſtimony in its favor. Nay, not only ſo, but the moſt wicked and profligate, though they hate religion

and righteouſneſs in itſelf; yet are they ſufficiently ſenſible of the connection between a religious profeſſion and its proper fruits, and ſufficiently apt to reproach thoſe in whom they obſerve the deficiency; and that in ſuch caſes as the performance would be painful, and not acceptable to themſelves. Thus a child of a ſlothful parent, a ſubject of an unfaithful magiſtrate, if their profeſſion is ſuch as to make the neglect ſcandalous, ſhall deſpiſe them in their hearts, and ſometimes go ſo far as to reproach them by their words, even where their own eaſe and ſecurity is wholly owing to that very criminal indulgence. From all which it evidently appears, that a conſcientious diſcharge of ſuch duties as are moſt uſeful and profitable to others, is highly proper to make our light to ſhine before men.

I am ſenſible, my brethren, that theſe claſſes into which I have divided our public and viſible duties, viz. ſuch as are moſt rare and uncommon, ſuch as are moſt ſubject to the obſervation of others, ſuch as are moſt acceptable, and ſuch as are moſt profitable to them, are not ſo entirely diſtinct one from another, but that there are many parts of the duty of a Chriſtian, which fall under more than one of theſe diviſions, and ſome that may perhaps fall under them all; yet I have mentioned them ſeparately, becauſe each of them hath ſome duties which do peculiarly, or at leaſt eminently belong to itſelf: and as every one of them contributes to ſhew us the extent of our duty upon the whole, ſo they, at the ſame time, ſerve to ſet the obligations to it in a ſtriking light.

II. I proceed now to the ſecond thing propoſed, which was, briefly to illuſtrate the two motives added in the text to enforce the exhortation; and theſe are, the glory of God, and the good of others.

1. The glory of God. The glory of God is the ſupreme and higheſt aim of every real Chriſtian, to which every other deſign is ſubordinate and ſubſervient. I am not ignorant, that profane and worldly men are apt to deride this language, of the glory of God being the higheſt aim of a Chriſtian. It is not however the leſs agree-

able to truth, that it is contrary to the ſpirit of the world: "* For the natural man receiveth not the things of the "Spirit of God: for they are fooliſhneſs unto him; nei- "ther can he know them, becauſe they are ſpiritually "diſcerned." It might be ſufficient to ſupport this manner of ſpeaking, to ſay, it is agreeable to the word of God, which is a much ſurer teſt of truth, than any maxims eſtabliſhed by human wiſdom. But for ſilencing gainſayers in ſome meaſure, though their conviction (without a change of heart) cannot be hoped for, I would obſerve, that it is the character of a Chriſtian to love God above all: and is it not a natural conſequence of ſupreme love, to be jealous of the honor and zealous in the intereſt and cauſe of the object of our eſteem? Real love cannot, even in imagination, be ſeparated from this its natural effect and expreſſion.

Now, if this is once admitted, there is no way in which we can ſo well, or rather there is no way in which we can at all promote the glory of God, but by a holy and unblameable converſation. As the works of creation are ſaid to ſhew forth his glory, becauſe they point out his natural perfections exerted in their formation; ſo his reaſonable creatures glorify him, when his image, or ſome reſemblance of his moral excellence, and this as his own workmanſhip, is diſcerned upon their hearts.

It is no doubt, in one view, difficult for us to conceive how the glory of God, who is perfect and unchangeable, ſhould at all depend upon our conduct; yet as this is the light in which he hath repreſented it to us himſelf, ſo it is neceſſarily felt in this manner by every one of his ſervants. Indeed we ſee, that the unholineſs or the unguarded conduct of thoſe who profeſs to ſerve God, and ſtand in an apparent relation to him, has the greateſt tendency to diſhonor him, as far as that expreſſion hath any meaning or propriety in it. The ſtate of the world may eaſily convince us of this; for as no argument has been oftener uſed againſt the goſpel, ſo none ever gave it a deeper wound, than the wicked lives of its profeſſors. As many, therefore, as have any regard to the glory of God,

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

or the honor of the Redeemer's name, muſt carefully endeavor to make their light ſhine before men, "that they "may ſee their good works, and glorify their Father "which is in heaven."

2. The other obligation contained in the text, to an uſeful or ſhining converſation, is the good of others. As ſome degree of love to mankind is naturally implanted in every heart, and as love to others is the ſecond commandment of the law, and a neceſſary effect of the love of God; ſo it is impoſſible but this love, if it be real, muſt, in every believer, evidence itſelf in a deep concern for and conſcientious endeavor after, the ſalvation of others. Whomſoever we love, we naturally expreſs this love, by endeavoring to avert from them thoſe ills which we moſt fear, and to procure for them thoſe advantages which to ourſelves appear moſt valuable: and therefore, the looking upon ſinners with indifference, and not uſing the means in our power for their recovery and ſalvation, is the moſt unqueſtionable evidence, either of our not believing the important truths of religion, or being altogether void of good-will to our fellow-creatures, or rather of both; becauſe they are eſſential branches of the ſame character. A parent who ſhould profeſs, from his own experience, to have the greateſt apprehenſions of the danger of a certain practice, and yet ſhould freely ſuffer or encourage his children in the ſame practice, would give good ground to judge, either that his fears were wholly affected, or that he was altogether deſtitute of love to his children, or concern for their welfare.

Now, how can any man more effectually promote the real, that is, the everlaſting intereſt of others about him, than by a ſhining example of piety and uſefulneſs of converſation? A blameleſs life, ſuch as becometh the goſpel, is a more effectual reprimand to vice, and a more inviting argument to the practice of religion, than the beſt of reaſoning. Reaſon and argument, to pattern and example, is but as an uninformed picture to a living man. The moſt part of mankind are beſt inſtructed by their ſenſes, and are both unwilling to attend to, and incapable of perceiving the force of ſpeculative reaſoning; but a good life

anſwering to what their own conſciences declare to be right. is a ſenſible repreſentation that never fails to make an impreſſion, both on the memory and heart. As the impreſſion on the wax is more diſcernible than the engraving on the ſeal, though this laſt be juſt and perfect, whereas many accidents may render the impreſſed image faulty and defective; ſo though a juſt and complete view of the doctrine of Chriſt is only to be had from the ſcriptures of truth, yet the general integrity and uprightneſs of a good man is more legible to the bulk of mankind; and being the character of a man originally of like paſſions with themſelves, engages them to imitate it. From all this I conclude, that the love of God, and the love of our neighbor, jointly concur in laying the ſtrongeſt obligation upon every Chriſtian to make his light ſhine before men.

III. I proceed now, in the laſt place, to make ſome practical improvement of what has been ſaid. And,

Firſt, From what has been ſaid, you may ſee in what reſpect alone it is our duty to aim at the approbation of others, and from what principle it ought to flow. We are bound ſo to order our outward converſation, as that it may on the one hand, contribute nothing to the corruption of others, but rather that they may be invited to the practice, and perſuaded of the excellence and amiableneſs of true religion. There is no character againſt which our Saviour pronounces a ſeverer doom, than that of being religious that we may be ſeen of men; that is to ſay, when the view is only to procure their applauſe to our own character as a gratification of vanity. Such perſons have their reward. But when the deſign is, to watch that the name of God be not blaſphemed on our account, to bear much fruit that God may be glorified, there are few things more uſeful and important. For this reaſon, the friends of religion owe no thanks to thoſe who glory in a contempt of what others think or ſay of them, who are at no pains to avoid the appearance of evil, but freely indulge themſelves in whatever they can, with any plauſibility, alledge to be lawful in itſelf. They may cry out, as much as they will, againſt the uncharitableneſs and cenſorioufneſs of the

the world; but they themſelves are acting in downright contradiction to the exhortation in our text, and neither ſhow regard to the will of God, nor compaſſion to the ſouls of men. In oppoſition to this, the Chriſtian who would make his light to ſhine, in obedience to his maſter's command, muſt uſe the utmoſt tenderneſs; and circumſpection, not leſt his own reputation ſhould be wounded, but leſt religion ſhould ſuffer through his unguarded conduct. Such an one hath this advantage, that though perfectly to pleaſe a capricious world is impoſſible, he may yet obtain mercy of God to be faithful; and though there is a wo to the world becauſe of offences, he may eſcape the wo of that man by whom the offence cometh.

In the ſecond place, What hath been ſaid upon this ſubject ſerves to reprove the ſin, and ſhew the danger, of all thoſe who are notoriouſly deficient in the practice of the duty recommended in the text. Indeed you may ſee from the extent of it, that it affords ground of humiliation for all without exception; and, like every other precept of the pure and holy law of God, ſhews plainly, that a perfect righteouſneſs is not to be found in ourſelves; and that, for our final acceptance, we muſt be indebted to the free grace of God, through the redemption that is in Chriſt Jeſus. But, in a particular manner, this reproof is directed to two ſorts of perſons.

Firſt, Thoſe who are wholly unprofitable to others, and altogether inſenſible of their obligation to profit them. There are not a few in the world who openly juſtify themſelves, and extenuate their ſins by this pretence, that they do no harm to others; that, if they do evil, none ſuffer but themſelves. This is the uſual pretence of diſſolute livers, who are plunged in ſenſuality. Let ſuch conſider their entire neglect of the command of our Saviour in the text; let them conſider their obligations to ſerve God, and the account they muſt render to him. Let me ſuppoſe any of you had a ſervant who ſhould altogether neglect your buſineſs, and, upon your reproving him, ſhould make this excuſe, I have done no harm, I have put nothing out of order, I have not hindered the other ſervants in their work; how would you be ſatisfied? or rather

with what indignation would you receive the ſhameleſs pretence? Let this then convince you of the juſtice of the ſentence that ſhall at laſt be pronounced by our Supreme Maſter upon all ſuch: * "Caſt ye the unprofitable "ſervant into utter darkneſs, where there ſhall be weeping "and wailing, and gnaſhing of teeth." But the worſt of it is, this excuſe, weak as it is, is not true; for all thoſe who are not profitable, muſt be hurtful to others. Drunkards, ſwearers, profane and laſcivious jeſters, and the whole tribe of thoſe who pretend to do harm to none but themſelves, pollute and corrupt, by their example and influence, all that come within their reach: ſo that, for the hazard of infection, thieves and robbers are leſs dangerous companions.

But, ſecondly, This reproof ought to be directed to ſuch as are further chargeable with the actual guilt of ſeducing others. How many are there who, by the contrary methods of flattering inſinuations, or deriſion and inſult, as they expect from the diſpoſitions of the perſons the one or the other will be moſt ſucceſsful, endeavor to baniſh a ſenſe of religion from the minds of others, and gradually to involve them in ſin and guilt? This is the immediate tendency of all that converſation, which, with a malicious pleaſure, enlarges upon the real or ſuppoſed miſcarriages of the people of God, and charges every profeſſion of religion with hypocriſy. How aggravated is the guilt of all ſuch, and how dreadful will be the puniſhment! They are eminent and faithful agents for the devil. The works of their father they do, and his reward they ſhall ſhare. As the union and mutual love of the ſaints in heaven will increaſe the happineſs of every particular member of that bleſſed ſociety; ſo we muſt ſuppoſe, that the mutual reproaches of the damned and miſerable ſpirits in hell, accuſing each other as the authors of their deſtruction, will greatly ſharpen their anguiſh. The fear of this ſeems to have alarmed the rich man, even in torments, leſt his brethren ſhould come to the ſame place. What muſt a child, for example, ruined by the neglect of reſtraint, or pernicious example of a parent, think of or ſay to the author of his miſery? Oh! unmerciful monſter, and not a parent,

* Matth. xxv, 30.

who, inſtead of correcting, ſported with or encouraged the firſt inſtances of impiety: who taught me, by example, to profane my Creator's name, and to neglect his ſervice; and who, though ambitious of making me rich and great for a few days in a tranſitory world, haſt contributed to bring me to, and fix me forever in this place of torment! Take warning then, I beſeech you, all of every rank, and increaſe not your own condemnation by the guilt of ſeducing others.

In the third place, what hath been ſaid upon this ſubject will enable you to try the purity and ſincerity of your outward converſation. An inquiry here is of the more conſequence, that we are in great danger of deceiving ourſelves, becauſe both a truly ſerious and a worldly motive may lead to many of the ſame outward actions. For this purpoſe let me aſk you, whether it is the glory of God, and the good of others, that makes you watchful of your conduct; or a tenderneſs of your own reputation? This may be, in a good meaſure, diſcerned by the faithful ſearch and trial of your own hearts; and particularly by obſerving, whether the injuries and reproaches of wicked men excite in you a greater reſentment of the offence, or compaſſion for their folly. Again, I would aſk you, whether you are equally conſcientious in ſuch duties as may be painful and troubleſome, and may expoſe you to the reproaches and inſults of the ungodly, as in thoſe that immediately tend to your outward honor and credit? I have ſhown above, that it is neceſſary to make your light to ſhine, by the firſt as well as the laſt. Is then your concern equal and impartial to fulfil the duties of your ſtation, whatever they are, whether agreeable or mortifying to the fleſh? or are you moſt careful when you will reap the greateſt preſent reward? By examining into theſe particulars, you may be enabled to judge of the purity of your intentions.

In the laſt place, ſuffer me to improve this ſubject, by an earneſt exhortation to all who now hear me, to the practice of the duty recommended in the text, to "make "your light ſhine before men, that they may ſee your "good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

That this may be the more diſtinct and effectual, I ſhall addreſs it to three different claſſes.

Firſt, To thoſe who are the profeſſed advocates of good works. Every one who hath any experience of, or commerce with the world, muſt know, that there is a ſet of men who profeſs to love and eſteem thoſe diſcourſes only that teach and recommend good works; and that in order to ſtate a diſtinction where there ought to be none, between the truths of the glorious goſpel, and the doctrines of morality. I intreat all of you to conſider what hath been ſaid of the great extent of viſible religion, and it will have a greater tendency to humble you, and excite you to ſeek the ſanctifying grace of God as the ſource of true holineſs, than to glory in the excellence or perfection of your moral character. Take heed alſo, that you fall not into the ſhameful inconſiſtency too common in the world, of being the ſtrongeſt pleaders for moral preaching, and the leaſt tender of moral practice. What a ſhame and ſcandal is it, and how pitiful in the eyes of thoſe who underſtand what true and undefiled religion is, to hear one who is unwilling, unable or aſhamed to worſhip God in his own family, who is but rarely to be ſeen in the public aſſemblies of God's people, who hardly ever gave child or ſervant a ſerious advice, but whom they have often ſeen guilty of drunkenneſs and exceſs; to hear, I ſay, ſuch an one riſe up as an advocate for morality; to hear him crying out, morality is the whole of religion; and therefore that he cannot endure ſuch ſtuff as conviction and humiliation, converſion or regeneration, flying to, embracing, or relying upon a Saviour; phraſes which, among too many, are now going into deſuetude; whether they retain their important meaning, I ſhall leave to the judgment of another day. Nay, I am afraid we might produce more inſtances than one, capable of ſaying, upon hearing a diſcourſe of the love of God, "Such things are not to be underſtood; 'twere pity but miniſters would ſatisfy themſelves with preaching plain morality;" as if the love of God, which is the ſum and ſubſtance of the moral law, were no part of it at all. To ſuch may it not juſtly be

faid, " * Thou that makeft thy boaft of the law, through " breaking the law difhonoreft thou God ?" Let all fuch of you, therefore, be exhorted to act up to their character, " If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." But be fure you underftand what thefe commandments are : and then, if you can maintain before God, who is greater than your hearts, that you have kept thefe perfectly in thought, word and deed, you may reft your falvation upon it ; for it not only was, but continues to be a certain truth, that " the man who doth them fhall live in them." But it is greatly to be feared, that this is a fource of life, by far too deep for any of the children of Adam to draw it out.

In the fecond place, I would addrefs this exhortation to all who have, or profefs to have a high eftеem of the doctrine of Chrift, and of him crucified. Extremes commonly beget one another ; and fo the ill-founded zeal which defpifers of the gofpel fometimes pretend for good works, makes others ftate themfelves in oppofition to them, and makes the word itfelf to have an unacceptable found. But, my brethren, beware of being thus overcome of evil. Remember the words of our Saviour, " Let your light fo " fhine before men, that they may fee your good works." Hear alfo the apoftle Paul " †This is a faithful faying, and " thefe things I will that thou affirm conftantly, that they " which have believed in God, might be careful to main- " tain good works." You cannot more effectually bring a reproach on that holy name by which you are called, and in which you glory, than by being enemies in word or in deed to holinefs and purity of converfation, or by not being even apparently and vifibly holy. For though you muft lay your account with the reproach of men, and hatred of the world in many cafes, wo is pronounced againft you, if you do not " love them that hate you, and blefs " them that perfecute you." Let therefore your converfation be without offence. Neglect not any part of your duty in the fight of the world, and be the more watchful, that, on account of your profeffion, they will be the more diligent in obferving, and the more fevere in cenfuring

* Rom. ii. 23. † Titus iii. 8.

your conduct. Whilſt therefore you remember that faith in Chriſt is the only ſource of new obedience, remember alſo, that faith without works is dead, being alone.

In the laſt place, I would addreſs this exhortation to all ſuch in this audience as, by their office or ſtation, or wealth or character, are raiſed above others. You will ſurely be ſenſible of the propriety of this exhortation, "Let your "light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee your good "works." You are placed in a conſpicuous ſituation, expoſed to public view, and your influence will be great, whether it be profitable or hurtful. You ought not to count your higher ſtation in life a favor blindly beſtowed on you for your pleaſure only, but a truſt committed to you for which you muſt render an impartial account. How ſhould this repreſs and reſtrain all vain-glorious oſtentation of the temporary differences between man and man, and excite to a diligent improvement of your talents againſt the coming of your Lord, when the higheſt ſhall be upon a level with the loweſt. I hope it will contribute to enforce the exhortation, that, in this age, the declining ſtate of religion loudly calls for the aſſiſtance of all to its revival, but particularly for eminent and ſhining examples. How hard is it, that when vice and infidelity have ſo many advocates in writing and converſation, there ſhould be ſo few exerting themſelves in their ſtation, for the promoting of truth and righteouſneſs! And let none excuſe themſelves for their own neglect of duty, by throwing the blame upon others, and holding up to light the ſloth or wickedneſs of thoſe who are moſt eminently guilty. Let none ſay, "Alas, my ſphere of uſefulneſs is very narrow, my influence is very ſmall; but if thoſe who "are in more eminent ſtations, and whoſe ſtations, give "them greater weight, would but exert themſelves, the "effect would be ſenſible." Remember your ſtations are juſt what God hath aſſigned you, and for theſe, and theſe alone, you are to be called to an account. The leſs important they are, the duties are the more eaſily fulfilled, and the neglect, in one reſpect at leaſt, (though I cannot ſay in all,) more criminal and inexcuſeable. To conclude, Let the wiſe and powerful magiſtrates, miniſters, parents,

and heads of families, be diligent in diſcharging the duties incumbent upon them, and join earneſt prayer to God, that he would ariſe and effectually plead his own cauſe. Amen.

All MANKIND by NATURE under SIN.

A

SERMON.

ROMANS iii. 23.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

THE whole revelation of the will of God to mankind, both in the Old Teſtament and the New, proceeds upon the ſuppoſition that they are ſinners; that is to ſay, tranſgreſſors of his law, and liable to the ſtroke of his juſtice. This only can give meaning to the doctrine of *redemption*. None can underſtand, at leaſt none can reliſh or embrace it, unleſs they believe, and are perſuaded of this preliminary truth.

What I have now ſaid, appears from many expreſs paſſages of the holy ſcriptures; and is particularly evident from the general ſtrain, and from the very ſtructure of the epiſtle to the Romans. In it the apoſtle, who had never been at Rome, gives a full and particular account of the doctrine of Chriſt; and he lays the foundation for this by a diſtinct and labored proof, that all mankind, both Jews and Gentiles, are *under sin*. In imitation of his example, I intend to begin my diſcourſes on practical religion, by endeavoring to impreſs your minds with a ſenſe of the ſame truth. This muſt lead the way to the ſaving knowledge of the Redeemer; and as he only can build ſecurely, who takes care that every part of the ſuperſtructure reſt immediately or ultimately upon the foundation, it is as neceſſary to be remembered by ſaints, as to be received by ſinners.

It may perhaps, on a ſlight view, appear to be ſuperfluous. 'All mankind,' ſome will ſay, 'are ready to ac-'knowledge that they are ſinners; and there is great rea-'ſon to believe they are ſincere in this confeſſion.' But, my brethren, a little reflection may convince you, that this general acknowledgment is either very inſincere, or very imperfect and defective. It is plainly a light ſenſe of ſin that enables the multitude to ſleep in ſecurity. It is plainly a light ſenſe of ſin that betrays men into the commiſſion of it, and emboldens them to continue in it. It is plainly a light ſenſe of ſin that blunts the edge of all the threatenings in the word of God, and the admonitions of his providence. Is it not from a light ſenſe of ſin, that when the preaching of the goſpel is not wholly deſerted, its ineſtimable truths are received without thankfulneſs, and heard without profit?

For theſe reaſons, I propoſe, through the aſſiſtance of divine grace, to diſcourſe a little on the words of the apoſtle now read: "For all have ſinned, and come ſhort of the "glory of God:" And, in ſo doing, ſhall

1. Endeavor to confirm the truth contained in them, That all mankind are ſinners, or tranſgreſſors of the law of God, and liable to his righteous judgment. And,

2. Shall make a practical improvement of the ſubject.

I. In the firſt place, then, let us endeavor to confirm the truth contained in the text, That all mankind are ſinners, or tranſgreſſors of the law of God, and liable to his righteous judgment. And here, my brethren, it puts me a little to a ſtand, in what manner to handle this important ſubject; whether in the way of reaſon or affection; whether in the way of cool and concluſive arguments directed to the judgment, or pointed interrogatories directed to the conſcience. Many, nay, innumerable, are the cavils that have been brought by men of corrupt minds againſt this fundamental truth. The father of lies, indeed, ſeems to conſider it, and juſtly, as the corner-ſtone of true religion, which, if he is able to weaken or undermine, it muſt end in the fall and ruin of the whole fabric. If there be any among you, as poſſibly there are, infected with the poiſon

of infidelity, all exhortation and warning will be treated by ſuch with diſdain, while their objections, however weak, have not been brought into view. On the other hand, there are multitudes of ſinners borne away by luſt and paſſion, who are incapable of underſtanding the force of ſpeculative reaſoning, and who have an unhappy tendency to overlook, as what does not concern them, every thing that is treated in that way. I ſhall be obliged, therefore, to have an eye to both: and oh! that it may pleaſe God to enable me ſo to propoſe to the judgment, and ſo to preſs upon the conſcience, this neceſſary truth, as that ſome careleſs perſons may be awakened, and brought to an attention to the one thing needful; and that if any have hitherto taken up with imperfect notions of religion, and built their hope upon the ſand, they may be perſuaded in time to diſtruſt that dangerous ſituation, and to found it upon *the Rock of ages*.

For the reaſon above aſſigned, it is difficult to determine, what uſe is to be made of ſcripture-teſtimony on ſuch a ſubject. The charge of guilt upon the ſinner, ſeems to be only preparatory to, and muſt, as it were, pave the way for the reception of ſcripture-truths. If the teſtimony of God in ſcripture is to be reſted on, this one paſſage is ſufficient; but the unbelieving heart is ready to challenge and call in queſtion every ſuch ſcripture-declaration. I find the worthy author of a well-known catechiſm, commonly uſed in the inſtruction of Children, joins together ſcripture and experience, in the anſwer to that queſtion, "How do you know, that you are born in a ſtate of ſin "and miſery?" Anſ. "God's word tells me ſo. Beſides, "I find my heart naturally backward to that which is good, "and prone to that which is evil." After this example, and conſidering, that by the law is the knowledge of ſin, we ſhall not ſeparate them; the rather, that God is able to make his own word, even in the bare repetition of it, quick and *powerful*, Heb. iv. 12. In the further illuſtration of this head, therefore, I ſhall, firſt briefly lay before you ſome of the ſcripture-declarations on this ſubject; and, ſecondly, confirm them from experience, the viſible ſtate of the world, and the teſtimony of our own hearts.

Firſt, Allow me to lay before you ſome of the ſcripture-declarations on this ſubject. And that I may avoid handling the ſubject ſyſtematically, and tediouſly, I join together original and actual ſin. Every one who is able to underſtand what I ſay, is concerned in both: and indeed they are inſeparable the one from the other. The deplorable wickedneſs in which the world in general is overwhelmed, hath flowed in a continued ſtream from the firſt ſin of Adam; and the ſinfulneſs of every perſon's practice has the corruption of his nature as its fruitful ſource. See the account given of the world, Gen. vi. 5. "And "God ſaw the wickedneſs of man was great in the earth, "and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart "was only evil continually." This you may compare with Gen. viii. 21. "And the Lord ſaid, I will not "again curſe the ground any more for man's ſake; for the "imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth."

See alſo the confeſſion of David, Pſal. li. 5. "Behold, "I was ſhapen in iniquity; and in ſin did my mother con-"ceive me." In this the Pſalmiſt plainly and clearly teaches the original and univerſal corruption of our nature. What he aſſerts concerning himſelf, muſt be equally true of all the human race; otherwiſe, inſtead of making a proper part of his confeſſion, it would be an excuſe or extenuation of his ſin. Nothing can more plainly ſhow the force of this text, than the aukward endeavors uſed by ſome to evade or miſinterpret it. For example, how mean a ſubterfuge is it, to pretend, that David declared, he was ſhapen in iniquity, and conceived by his mother in ſin; becauſe he was the iſſue of ſome criminal commerce between his father and a maid-ſervant, or between the wife of Jeſſe and another man? This is plainly a profane invention, offered without any manner of proof, or the leaſt inſinuation in the hiſtory of that great prince. Beſides, it is evidently beſide his purpoſe in the pſalm refered to, where he is confeſſing his own ſinful nature, and not the ſinful deeds of his parents. If there be meaning in words, his intention is, to humble himſelf before God, not only for his adultery and murder in the matter of Uriah, but as a *tranſgreſſor from the womb*.

To this you may add the teſtimony of a greater than David, *viz.* our bleſſed Lord and Saviour himſelf, John iii. 6. "That which is born of the fleſh, is fleſh; and "that which is born of the Spirit, is ſpirit." For underſtanding the proof drawn from his text, you may obſerve, that though the word *fleſh* has various ſignifications in ſcripture; ſometimes, for example, ſignifying the weakneſs of our mortal nature, unable to ſupport itſelf, and liable to a variety of changes, which muſt at laſt end in diſſolution; yet here it evidently ſignifies our nature as corrupted by ſin. This appears from the oppoſition of the two clauſes: for it is certain, that thoſe who are regenerated, are ſtill liable to all the weakneſs of mortality. It muſt therefore bear the ſame meaning in this place as in Rom. viii. 8. "So then they that are in the fleſh, cannot "pleaſe God." It is with a view to this great truth that Job, who pleads with ſo much warmth his general integrity, yet ſays, Job xiv. 3, 4. "And doſt thou open thine "eyes upon ſuch an one, and bringeſt me into judgment, "with thee? Who can bring a clean thing out of an un-"clean? Not one.

With this agree many other ſcripture-declarations, ſome of which I ſhall mention. Pſal. xiv. 2, 3. "The Lord "looked down from heaven upon the children of men; to "ſee if there were any that did underſtand, and ſeek God. "They are all gone aſide, they are all together become filthy: "there is none that doth good, no, not one." Pſ. lviii. 3. "The wicked are eſtranged from the womb, they go aſtray "as ſoon as they be born, ſpeaking lies." Iſaiah xlviii. 8. "Yea, thou heardſt not, yea, thou kneweſt not, yea, from "that time that thine ear was not opened: for I knew that "thou wouldſt deal very treacherouſly, and waſt called a "tranſgreſſor from the womb." Rom. iii. 9, 10, 11, 12. "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wiſe: "for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that "they are all under ſin; as it is written, There is none "righteous, no not one: There is none that underſtand-"eth, there is none that ſeeketh after God. They are all "gone out of the way, they are together become unpro-

" fitable, there is none that doth good, no not one." To theſe, I only add that clear and ſtrong paſſage, Eph. ii. 1, 2, 3. " And you hath he quickened who were dead in " treſpaſſes and ſins, wherein in time paſt ye walked ac- " cording to the courſe of this world, according to the " prince of the power of the air, the ſpirit that now work- " eth in the children of diſobedience. Among whom alſo " we all had our converſation in times paſt, in the luſts " of our fleſh, fulfilling the deſires of the fleſh, and of the " mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even " as others."

In this ſummary view of the declarations of ſcripture upon this ſubject, I have confined myſelf to ſuch paſſages as have an aſpect upon the ſtate of our nature in general. And indeed, as concluſive a proof of its being the doctrine of ſcripture, may be drawn conſequentially as directly. With this view, not to mention many other arguments, I beg your attention to the two following; 1. The tenor of the goſpel-meſſage, particularly the extent of the commiſſion, and the language uſed through the whole: Mark xvi. 15. " Go ye into all the world, and preach the goſpel " to every creature." John iii. 16. " For God ſo loved " the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that who- " ſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have ever- " laſting life." Examine the import of this truth. Whom did the Father love? or to whom did he ſend the Saviour? To the world, and to every creature. For what end did he love them, and for what purpoſe did the Redeemer come? To ſave them from periſhing. But why were they in danger of periſhing? Doubtleſs, becauſe they were in ſin. In vain, then, do men exerciſe their ingenuity in explaining away particular paſſages. This truth does not reſt upon an expreſſion or two, the meaning of which muſt be aſcertained by critical ſkill, but upon the whole of the goſpel. If we do not throw aſide the Bible altogether, Chriſt Jeſus came into the world to obtain forgiveneſs for the guilty, to ſave the miſerable, and to redeem the ſlave.

The other argument is drawn from the ſeals of the covenant of peace; and particularly the initiating ſeal, both

under the Old Teſtament and the New, of which infants were admitted to be partakers. If they received theſe ſeals before the commiſſion of actual guilt, it cannot be but the nature itſelf muſt be defiled; eſpecially as baptiſm is expreſsly called *the baptism of repentance, for the remission of sins*, Mark i. 4.

Thus I have laid before you what the ſcripture teaches us on the ſinfulneſs of our nature, including all the poſterity of Adam, without exception. I beſeech you, therefore, my beloved hearers, to conſider the concern you have in it, as a part of the whole. If you have any belief of the truth of the ſcriptures as the word of God, attempt not to warp or pervert them when ſpeaking contrary to your fond prejudices. Deſire not that miniſters ſhould ſpeak unto you ſmooth things, and propheſy deceit; but receive with humility and fear the divine will, however heavy a ſentence of condemnation it may carry againſt yourſelves, viz. that you are ſinners by nature; that your hearts are eſtranged and alienated from the love of God; and that, if you die in that condition, you ſhall not ſee his face in mercy.

I now proceed to the *second* branch of this head; which was, to confirm the account given in ſcripture from experience, that is to ſay, from the viſible ſtate of the world, and the teſtimony of our own hearts.

Let us then ſee what evidence is afforded us from the viſible ſtate of the world, *that all have sinned*, &c. And here, my brethren, what an inſtructive leſſon, but at the ſame time what a humbling and melancholy proſpect, opens to our view! There are many remarks which might be profitably made on the ſtate of the world in every age, to ſhew how much ſin hath reigned in the hearts of men, and what deſolation it hath wrought in the place of their abode. The great difficulty is, to range them in proper order, and propoſe them in a ſimple and perſpicuous manner, that ordinary hearers may underſtand and profit by them. For this purpoſe, let us firſt take a view of mankind in a public or national, and then in a private or perſonal, capacity.

1. Let us conſider mankind in a public or national capacity. In this view, what is the hiſtory of paſt ages but

the hiſtory of human guilt? If, inſtead of taking up with the idle and viſionary hypotheſes of philoſophers, we only attend to what men have been in fact, we ſhall be obliged to ſay, with the Spirit of God, that "the imagination of "the heart of man is only evil from his youth." It is not proper here to omit, or rather it is highly neceſſary to mention, the impiety and idolatry of the ſeveral nations of the world. Excepting the ſmall number of Abraham's family, who were *the election of God*, and, by a peculiar diſpoſition of Providence, the depoſitaries of his truths, every other nation upon the face of the globe, not only deſerted the worſhip of the true God, but fell headlong into the moſt ſtupid and ſottiſh idolatry. This was not peculiar to thoſe nations who continued in ignorance, and whom the more improved and poliſhed thought proper to diſtinguiſh by the name of *barbarians*, but was at leaſt equally true of thoſe who were moſt highly civilized. Of the wiſeſt nations, as well as the wiſeſt men, the apoſtle very juſtly ſays in this epiſtle, ch. i. 22, 23. "Profeſſing "themſelves to be wiſe, they became fools; and changed "the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made "like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed "beaſts, and creeping things."

I muſt make even a farther obſervation, and intreat your attention to it, That the wiſeſt in profeſſion ſeem to have become the greateſt fools. It ſeems to have been deſigned in Providence, as a ſtanding and indelible mark of the vanity of human wiſdom, that thoſe very nations who were moſt early in their application to, and moſt ſucceſsful in their cultivation of the liberal arts, were the moſt extravagant and ſenſeleſs in their theological opinions, and religious rites. I mean, particularly, the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans; worſhipping bulls and calves, ſerpents and inſects, the moſt ſtupid of four-footed beaſts, and creeping things of the moſt ſhocking form. This every one may ſatisfy himſelf of, who will look into the hiſtories of theſe celebrated nations, as they have been tranſmitted to us by themſelves.

Conſider, my brethren, the unnatural cruelties of the religious rites of many nations. It was frequent and ge-

neral with them, to offer up human ſacrifices, and make their children paſs through the fire; the very reflection on which is ſufficient to fill a conſiderate perſon with horror. Conſider alſo the ſcandalous impurity of ſome of their ceremonies, and the obſcene hiſtory of the objects of their worſhip. Strange to think of indeed! yet ſo it is, that moſt of the eminent writers of antiquity are employed in deſcribing the drinking and merriment, the ſcolding and quarrels, the tricks and robberies, and the amorous intrigues of their gods and goddeſſes.

If we think in a ſerious manner on theſe undoubted facts, can we help ſaying, Oh! the ingratitude of thoſe wretches among us who call themſelves freethinkers, who have been taught by revelation only to form rational and conſiſtent notions of the firſt cauſe and Creator of all things, and yet reject revelation entirely, and pretend to found them upon human reaſon! I am ſenſible there are ſome who do not think that the idolatry of the heathen world ought to be reckoned among their crimes; but if you will conſult the Old Teſtament, you will find it conſidered there as the firſt and moſt atrocious crime which ſolicited the vengeance of an offended God. If you conſult this epiſtle to the Romans, you will find it leads the way in the account given of human apoſtaſy. The firſt of all the ten commands, which were given as a ſum of the moral law, is, "Thou ſhalt have no other gods before "me." And indeed, if the firſt duty of natural religion be a confeſſion and acknowledgment of God our creator, the firſt of all ſins muſt be, a contempt of his name, or a profanation of his worſhip.

But idolatry was not alone. From this, as a fruitful ſource, flowed every other human vice. What a terrible detail is given us by the hiſtorians of every age! On what is it that all the great tranſactions of the world have ſtill turned? Has it not been on the ambition, cruelty, injuſtice, oppreſſion, and raging luſt and impurity, of men. Whatever number of virtuous perſons was among them, they ſeem to have either lain concealed, or fallen a ſacrifice to the envy and malice of others. Since the firſt murder, of Abel, by his brother Cain, what terrible havoc has been

made of man by man! We are ſo habituated to this, that it makes little impreſſion. We can even peruſe, with attention and delight, the narratives of ſtratagems of war, ferocity in combat, devaſtation and bloodſhed. Who are the perſons who have acquired the greateſt renown in the preſent or preceding ages? Who are the perſons who have been the greateſt objects of human admiration? Have they not been the moſt active, and the moſt ſucceſsful, deſtroyers of their fellow-creatures? This circumſtance indeed communicates the guilt of individuals to the whole; ſhows that it belongs to mankind in general; and that the deſcription given by the apoſtle is not more ſhocking than true, ch. i. 28, 29, 30, 31, 32. "And even as "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God "gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do thoſe things "which are not convenient: being filled with all un-"righteouſneſs, fornication, wickedneſs, covetouſneſs, ma-"liciouſneſs; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malig-"nity; whiſperers, backbiters, haters of God, deſpiteful, "proud, boaſters, inventors of evil things, diſobedient to "parents, without underſtanding, covenant-breakers, with-"out natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who "knowing the judgment of God (that they which commit "ſuch things are worthy of death), not only do the ſame, "but have pleaſure in them that do them."

There are to be found upon record inſtances of ſuch dreadful and aggravated guilt, as it were to be wiſhed they had been, or could have been buried in oblivion. For this reaſon, I ſhall neither mention their names, nor cite the examples; but obſerve, that the extent and prevalence of wickedneſs ſhould be conſidered as a ſtrong proof of the corruption of the whole race; and the particular ſignal inſtances of aſtoniſhing or monſtruous crimes, as a proof of the exceſſive depravation of our nature, and what man in in his preſent ſtate is capable of. I know it is pleaſing and gratifying to human pride, to talk of the dignity of human nature, and the beauty of moral virtue; and if it be done in ſuch a manner as to make us eſteem the only mean of recovering our loſt integrity and original glory, I have no objection to it. But if it be ſpoken of man as he now is

without regenerating grace, I am certain it is more agreeable to reaſon and experience to ſay, that from the lengths to which ſome have proceeded, when placed in circumſtances of temptation, it is owing to the power of reſtraining providence, that others have been comparatively ſomewhat better.

I have ſeen it obſerved, with great apparent juſtice, that probably one end which God had in view when he ſhortened the period of human life after the deluge, was, to ſet bounds to the progreſs of human guilt. As it is the nature of vice, to ſtrengthen by habit, and increaſe by time; a race of wicked men living many hundreds of years, would degenerate and harden to a degree not eaſily conceived. And indeed, if we examine into the true cauſes of any little degree of order and peace which we now enjoy, we ſhall ſee abundant reaſon to adore the wiſdom of divine Providence, but very little to aſcribe much goodneſs to the human heart.

The moſt truly excellent characters which are to be found in hiſtory, and the moſt illuſtrious deeds which thoſe heroes have performed, have for their very foundation the corruption of the human race.

In this remark I have in view the ſages and legiſlators of antiquity, who acquired ſo much renown by eſtabliſhing ſyſtems of policy and government for different ſtates. What was this elſe, and indeed what was it called, but taming the ſavage, and reſtraining the profligate part of their fellow-creatures? It ſeems plainly to be the point in view in every human law, to bridle the fury of human inclination, and hinder one man from making a prey of another. This is well deſcribed by the apoſtle Paul, 1 Tim. i. 9. 10. "Knowing this, that the law is not "made for a righteous man, but for the lawleſs and diſobe-"dient, for the ungodly and for ſinners, for unholy and "profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mo-"thers, for man-ſlayers, for whoremongers, for them that "defile themſelves with mankind, for men-ſtealers, for "liars, for perjured perſons, and if there be any other "thing that is contrary to ſound doctrine." We have indeed the teſtimony of men againſt themſelves in this

caſe. It has been found to hold, without any exception, that the longer men live, they have the greater ſuſpicion of thoſe with whom they live; the greater experience they have of the world, they have the harder thoughts of men in general. In particular, thoſe who have been moſt converſant in public life, and have obtained moſt of what is called a knowledge of the world, have always the worſt opinion of human nature.

2. Let us now from a general, come to a particular and perſonal view of our preſent ſtate. You may be apt to ſuppoſe, that though the ſinfulneſs of human nature is too general, yet it is not univerſal; that though vice and wickedneſs has appeared conſpicuouſly, and though perhaps wicked men may have obtained the aſcendency in every nation, this will not ſerve to found a ſentence againſt every man. We might upon this part of the ſubject obſerve, that the truth illuſtrated above will receive confirmation from our moſt intimate knowledge of one another. Human nature will gain nothing by a cloſe inſpection. Take it either in general or particular, its beſt appearance is when viewed at a diſtance. The greateſt and beſt characters, when cloſely examined, have always ſuch blemiſhes and imperfections attending them, as greatly diminiſh their luſtre. This indeed has grown into a proverb, That much familiarity breeds contempt. On this account, we may ſafely ſay, that if ſuch is the ſtate of our nature, that no man is able to juſtify himſelf, or obtain the entire approbation of his fellow-ſinners, much more muſt "every "mouth be ſtopped, and all the world become guilty be- "fore God," Rom. iii. 19.

But the chief illuſtration of this part of the ſubject muſt be from the teſtimony which conſcience conſtrains every man to bear againſt himſelf. Examine, therefore, my brethren, what reaſon you have to be ſatisfied, that you yourſelves, unleſs your natures have been renewed by the Holy Ghoſt, are under the dominion of ſin; nay, that even ſuch as have been "brought again from the dead" do ſtill feel "a law in their members warring againſt the law "of God in their minds." Remember then that you have to do with him "who ſeeth in ſecret," and "who

"searcheth Jeruſalem as with candles." It was neceſſary formerly to take notice of the enormous effects of ſin in this life; we muſt now ſearch a little deeper, and conſider the beginning and ſource of theſe in the diſpoſition of the heart. It is true, there are probably many here who are juſtly chargeable with the groſſeſt crimes; ſuch as, impiety, lying, injuſtice, or uncleanneſs: and oh! that it may pleaſe God, that their ſins may find them out, and his word may be quick and powerful to their conviction. But what I have now in view is, to maintain the univerſal concluſion in the text, not only that many men have been profligates, but that every man is a ſinner.

For this purpoſe, it is of the utmoſt moment to put you in mind what ſin properly is. There are two ways of defence, you know, upon any trial: the one is, to deny the fact; the other to maintain it is no crime. It is of neceſſity, therefore, in the firſt place, to aſcertain the charge, by an account of the nature of ſin. Of this, I do not think there can be produced a juſter account than we have in our ſhorter catechiſm: "Sin is any want of conformi-"ty unto our tranſgreſſion of the law of God:" Which is nothing elſe but a brief illuſtration of the words of ſcripture, *Sin is the transgression of the law.* Let the conſcience, then, of every hearer anſwer to the charge. Have you kept or have you broken the law of God? Have you been obedient ſubjects to the King of kings? Have you done your own will, or the will of him that made you? However unwilling you may be to put this queſtion home at preſent, no perſon ſhall be able to decline the tribunal, or evade the anſwer in the day of judgment.

We have one great difficulty to ſtruggle with in the attempt of bringing the guilty to confeſſion, that ſin hath blinded the underſtanding, and perverted the judgment; ſo that after we have ſaid, that ſin is the tranſgreſſion of the law, there will remain another queſtion, What is the law, and how far doth it extend? Upon this we muſt have recourſe to the remaining traces that are left upon the conſcience; and I ſee nothing more proper, than to preſs home that ſummary which God hath given of his own right

and our duty, in the firſt and great commandment, "Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, "and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind;" Matth. xxii. 37. Are you your own? Have you no lord over you? Can you plead any exception to this command? Is not your Maker infinitely perfect, and infinitely amiable? Is he not worthy of your ſupreme love? If he is not, who is it, or what is it, that you have reaſon to prefer, or that can produce a better title? Can there be any thing more juſt than the ſentiment expreſſed by the pious Pſalmiſt, Pſal. lxxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but "thee? and there is none upon earth that I deſire beſides "thee." Is there excellence or ſweetneſs in the creature, and is there none or leſs in the Creator, from whom every inferior nature derives its very exiſtence, and on whom it depends every moment for its preſervation?

May I not hope to have ſome hold of ſinners here, in pleading the rights of their Maker? Are your hearts then naturally, and have they been habitually and ſupremely ſet upon God? Has it been your firſt and leading care, to know him, and to ſerve him, to inquire into his will, that you might do what was acceptable to him? Do you believe, that in his favor only is life, and therefore do you ſeek your happineſs and your comfort in him? Many are apt greatly to miſtake upon this ſubject; nay, it ſeems to be the leading deception of ſinners, to think nothing evil or puniſhable, but ſuch groſs crimes as are diſorderly in human ſociety, and obnoxious to human laws. It is ſcarce poſſible to make them ſenſible, how much guilt there is in a total forgetfulneſs of God; and yet this is the very ſource of human depravity. The chief thing blameable in our attachment to other things, is their filling the room that is due to God, their being employed in a manner that is diſhonorable to God, or, in other words, their being inſtruments of rebellion againſt the will of God.

Are there any of you, my brethren, who, by the kindneſs of Providence, have been kept free from groſs, viſible, and ſcandalous offences; who, from a natural coolneſs of temperament, have been chaſte or ſober; who, from a principle of honor, have been juſt or generous; who,

from the dictates of prudence, have been regular and decent; but have been unmindful of you duty to God, have been unwilling to think of him, or ſtrangers to delight in him? and are you not ſinners in his preſence? Have you been preſerved by his power, and yet never confeſſed the obligation? Have you been living daily upon his bounty, and yet ſeldom or never given him thanks, except in the moſt indifferent and formal manner, and ſuch worſhip, as is a much more proper occaſion for repentance than ground of confidence? How, then, ſhall you be able to ſtand in the judgment? "For of him, and "through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be "glory for ever. Amen."

II. I come now to make ſome practical improvement of what has been ſaid on this ſubject. And,

1. From what has been ſaid, you may learn how deeply and ſurely the foundation of the goſpel is laid. It is laid in the actual ſtate of the world, and in that depravity of our nature, which it is impoſſible to conceal, and which nothing but the greateſt obſtinacy and perverſion of mind can have the courage to deny. I am ſenſible, that nothing but an inward and perſonal conviction of guilt and miſery wrought by the Spirit of the living God, will bring the ſinner to embrace the goſpel; yet the neceſſity of ſalvation may be evinced in the cleareſt and moſt ſatisfactory manner, by reaſon and obſervation. As the viſible creation, when attentively viewed, ſerves to diſcover the wiſdom and omnipotence of God, and is, as it were, an open volume, which men of every tongue may read and admire; ſo the ſtate of the moral world, as it is called, plainly points out the guilt and apoſtaſy of man, and loudly calls for the interpoſition of the Saviour. This it is our duty to attend to, not only to ſtop the mouths of gainſayers, but to eſtabliſh the faith of God's children, that it may not be overthrown or unſettled by the cavils and objections of thoſe who lie in wait to deceive.

2. From what has been ſaid, you may ſee with what ſentiments we ſhould look upon the ſtate of the world, or peruſe the hiſtory of providence, and what profit we may

reap from it. When we ſee, as at preſent, in our own age and country, what profanity and neglect of God, what contempt or deſertion of his worſhip, prevails among many of every rank; what pride and luxury, what riot and ſenſuality, what uncleanneſs and debauchery, what lying, fraud, and perjury; and when we obſerve how one race of ſinners has ſucceeded another in every age, and that true religion has been generally, as it is ſtill, in a ſtruggling or perſecuted ſtate, we ought to be humbled for the ſin of our nature, and the ſhare which each of us has contributed to the general guilt. Inſtead of finding fault with Providence for the permiſſion of ſin, we ought to be filled with a holy indignation againſt ourſelves and others, for the perpetration of it. We ought to admire that wiſdom and power by which the King of kings ſets reſtraining bounds to the violence of men. Neither ought we to omit adoring his holineſs in the awful viſitations with which he ſometimes overtakes and overwhelms the wicked in their wickedneſs. When he ſends out his ſore judgments of war, famine, and peſtilence; or when he looks to the earth, and it trembles, as unable to bear all the guilt that is laid upon it; when thunder, lightning, and tempeſt, ſeem to threaten the immediate diſſolution of the whole fabric; we ought to conſider all theſe as the juſt puniſhment of ſin, and look forward with fear to that time, when he ſhall render to every man according to his works, and deſerved vengeance ſhall not be partial, but univerſal; when it ſhall not be occaſional and temporary, but final, unchangeable, and eternal.

3. You may learn from what has been ſaid, the ſtate and danger of thoſe who are chargeable with ſins of a heinous and aggravated nature. If all without exception are "under ſin; if every mouth muſt be ſtopped," &c. what ſhall be the condition of thoſe who have the ſhameful preeminence of being ſinners of the firſt order, who have done more than others to provoke the Lord to anger! If thoſe who have lived to themſelves, and not to God, ſhall not be able to ſtand in the judgment; what ſhall become of thoſe who have ſold themſelves to work iniquity, and whoſe abominable practices are a reproach to reaſon, as

well as a ſcandal to religion? I may even ſay further, in the words of the apoſtle Peter, "If the righteous ſcarcely "be ſaved, where ſhall the ungodly and the ſinner ap- "pear?" 1 Pet. iv. 18. I do the rather beg your attention to this, that we always find looſe livers the warmeſt advocates for libertine principles. It is the drunkard, the ſwearer, the impure fornicator, who are ſo ready to produce in converſation their pretended arguments againſt the corruption of human nature. I ſpeak to all ſuch within hearing. What benefit will you reap by denying original corruption, when you are juſtly chargeable with ſo many actual tranſgreſſions? If there are, or ever were, any perſons in the world without ſin, ſurely you cannot pretend that you are ſo yourſelves. You are aſhamed to reveal your hidden ſcenes to your fellow-ſinners, but how ſhall you conceal them, from the Searcher of all hearts? If you cannot bear to be told your faults by your fellow-creatures, with what ſpeechleſs confuſion ſhall you ſtand at laſt before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt? Let me therefore addreſs you in the words of your Maker by the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. l. 21, 22. "Theſe things thou haſt done, and I "kept ſilence: thou thoughteſt that I was altogether ſuch "a one as thyſelf: but I will reprove thee, and ſet them in "order before thine eyes. Now conſider this, ye that "forget God, leſt I tear you in pieces, and there be none "to deliver." May it pleaſe God effectually to convince you of your ſin and danger, and to lead you to his mercy, as revealed in the goſpel, for your forgiveneſs. I conclude with the advice of the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. ii. 12. "Kiſs "the Son, leſt he be angry, and ye periſh from the way, "when his wrath is kindled but a little: bleſſed are all "they that put their truſt in him."

The SINNER without EXCUSE before GOD.

A

SERMON.

PSALM cxxx. 3.

If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?

JUSTICE and mercy are the perfections of the divine nature, in which we as ſinners have a peculiar concern. Our world is the great theatre, and the human race the great, or, ſo far as we know, the only objects of their united exerciſe. Clear and juſt apprehenſions, therefore, of thoſe attributes, muſt lie at the foundation of all religion. It is eaſy to ſee, that a diſcovery, both of juſtice and mercy, is neceſſary to bring the ſinner to repentance. He muſt ſee the guilt and miſery in which he is involved, and the way by which he may certainly, and by which he can only obtain a recovery. The ſame views are equally neceſſary to every Chriſtian, during his continuance in this imperfect ſtate. They are neceſſary to that ſelf-denial which ought to be his habitual character, and to that humiliation and penitence which ought to be his frequent employment.

I muſt, however, obſerve, that though there are few of the attributes of God more frequently ſpoken of, perhaps there are few leſs diſtinctly underſtood. Men have either an imperfect knowledge, or weak perſuaſion of the juſtice of God, and thence deſpiſe his mercy. On the other hand, they are apt to take preſumptuous views of his ge-

neral mercy, and thence deſpiſe his juſtice and ſeverity. This is not peculiar to thoſe, who, upon the whole, are under the dominion of ſin. Even the children of God themſelves are ready, either to looſe their views of the majeſty and holineſs of God, which ſhould incline them to ſerve him with reverence and godly fear; or, on the other hand, by neglecting his mercy, to fall into that ſtate of ſlaviſh bondage and illiberal fear, which is equally injurious to the honor of God, and hurtful to their own peace.

On theſe accounts I have choſen to inſiſt a little on this paſſage of the Pſalmiſt David, in which we have an united view of divine juſtice and mercy; "If thou, Lord, "ſhouldſt mark iniquities, O Lord, who ſhall ſtand? But "there is forgiveneſs with thee; that thou mayſt be feared." It is thought by ſome, that this Pſalm was compoſed in that memorable period of his life, when he was plunged in the deepeſt guilt, by his adultery and murder in the matter of Uriah; but more commonly, that it was in the time of his perſecution, when the imminent dangers to which he was ſo often expoſed, brought his ſins ſtrongly to remembrance. Reſerving what is here ſaid of the mercy of God to another opportunity, let us now conſider the view given us of his juſtice, in this paſſage, "If "thou, Lord, ſhouldſt mark iniquities, O Lord, who ſhall "ſtand?" For this purpoſe I ſhall,

1. Endeavor to aſcertain and explain the meaning of the Pſalmiſt's aſſertion.

2. Support and confirm it from ſcripture and experience.

3. In the laſt place, I ſhall make a practical improvement of what may be ſaid upon it.

I. Let us then, firſt, endeavor to aſcertain and explain the meaning of the Pſalmiſt's expreſſion, "If thou, Lord, "ſhouldſt mark iniquities, O Lord, who ſhall ſtand?" Theſe words evidently carry in them the deepeſt ſenſe of ſin, a ſtrong and inward conviction of the impoſſibility of juſtifying himſelf before a pure and holy God, if he ſhould deal with him as in juſtice he might: "If thou, Lord

"ſhouldſt mark iniquities, O Lord, who ſhall ſtand?" God is an omniſcient being, every where preſent, to whom all our thoughts and ways, and conſequently all our ſins, are and muſt be perfectly known. The expreſſion, then, cannot mean, that there are any ſins unregarded, or not obſerved of God; becauſe this is impoſſible. The marking of iniquities here, ſeems to be an alluſion to what paſſes in human courts, where the judges ſet down, or put upon record all that is brought againſt the criminal, in order to found a ſentence of condemnation. In this view, the meaning muſt be, if God ſhould ſo mark iniquities, as to proceed to puniſh us for all of which we were really guilty, there could be no poſſibility of ſtanding ſuch an impartial trial.

I need not tell you, that the putting the words in the form of a queſtion, "O Lord, who ſhall ſtand?" does not imply, that there is any uncertainty in the matter, or that any can be found pure enough to endure ſuch a ſcrutiny, but rather ſerves to deny it in the ſtrongeſt manner. Again, we are not to ſuppoſe, that the Pſalmiſt, by putting the queſtion thus in general, "Who ſhall ſtand?" deſigned to turn the accuſation from himſelf, or to extenuate his own ſins, by bringing in others equally guilty. This is indeed the practice of many in the world, who ſeem to think the numbers of thoſe who are chargeable with any ſin, an excuſe or pallation of the guilt of particular offenders. But the true ſpirit of repentance leads to very different ſentiments: it makes the ſinner fix upon his own faults, and point at the ſins and plagues of his own heart, without thinking upon the ſins of others, unleſs as they may be an occaſion of diſcovering to him more of the depravation and wickedneſs of his own nature. So that the genuine import of the Pſalmiſt's expreſſion ſeems to be, If thou, Lord, ſhouldſt execute the decrees of juſtice, and puniſh every thing that is done amiſs, the holieſt man on earth would not be able to abide the trial; how much leſs would ſuch a ſinner as I be able to ſtand?

II. I proceed now to ſupport and confirm this truth from ſcripture and experience. And you will be pleaſed

to obſerve, that it is the conſtant doctrine of the Holy Scriptures; it is the uniform language of humility and penitence there. Thus the Pſalmiſt, Pſ. cxliii. 2. "Enter "not into judgment with thy ſervant: for in thy ſight "ſhall no man living be juſtified." To the ſame purpoſe, ſee the language of Job, ch. ix. 2. 3. 4. "I know it is "ſo of a truth: but how ſhould man be juſt with God? If "he will contend with him, he cannot anſwer him one of "a thouſand. He is wiſe in heart, and mighty in ſtrength: "who hath hardened himſelf againſt him, and hath proſ- "pered?" A clear diſcovery of the infinite majeſty of God, the unſpotted holineſs of his nature, the extent, the purity, and ſpirituality of his law, will immediately carry home a conviction of this truth, and make us ſenſible what impure and wretched creatures we are: it will make every one of us cry out with Job, after a diſcovery of the divine glory and perfection, ch. xl. 4, 5. "Behold, I am "vile, what ſhall I anſwer thee? I will lay mine hand "upon my mouth. Once have I ſpoken, but I will not "anſwer: yea, twice, but I will proceed no further."— And again, ch. xlii. 5, 6. "I have heard of thee by the "hearing of the ear: but now mine eye ſeeth thee. "Wherefore I abhor myſelf, and repent in duſt and aſh- "es." Every true penitent will ſay, with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. xix. 12. "Who can underſtand his errors? cleanſe "thou me from ſecret faults." Nay, he will conſider his daily preſervation as an evidence of the divine patience, in the ſuſpenſion of his ſentence, as in Lam. iii. 22, 23. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not conſumed, be- "cauſe his compaſſions fail not. They are new every "morning: great is thy faithfulneſs."

Theſe, my brethren, are examples of the ſentiments and language of the ſcripture-ſaints; and if we look a little into their characters, as ſet before us in the inſpired writings, we ſhall ſee, that ſelf-abaſement is one of the moſt certain proofs of true religion; that the more any perſon has made real improvement in holineſs, he will think and ſpeak in ſo much the humbler manner; will more clearly ſee the evil of ſin, and more readily confeſs its power and influence over his own heart. I know this

is very contrary to the ſpirit that prevails in the world; and particularly oppoſite to the reigning temper of the preſent age. I know alſo, that there are many objections raiſed againſt this fundamental truth. But inſtead of wrangling controverſy, in which our underſtandings are often loſt, and our paſſions irritated, rather than ſubdued; for further inforcing the above truth, I ſhall only urge every hearer to a ſerious and impartial reflection upon his own conduct. This, I am perſuaded, will, by the bleſſing of God, be the moſt effectual mean of ſilencing the reaſonings of the carnal mind, and forcing the conſcience to a confeſſion, both of the equity of the law, and the guilt of diſobedience.

For attaining this end, I ſhall juſt propoſe three general ſubjects of examination; and beg that you may ſhew fidelity to your own ſouls, in bringing them to the trial. 1. How many duties have you omitted, which you muſt be ſenſible you ought to have performed? 2. How often have you been guilty of expreſs tranſgreſſions of the law of God? 3. How many blemiſhes and imperfections cleave to thoſe very duties which you endeavor to perform in obedience to his will?

1. Then, How many duties have you omitted, which you muſt be ſenſible you ought to have performed? In charging you with neglect of duty, I muſt begin with unthankfulneſs and forgetfulneſs of God. Let the conſcience be ever ſo much biaſſed by partiality, or perverted by wrong principles, is it poſſible to deny the obligation of every creature to acknowledge his dependence upon the author of his being, the preſerver of his life, and the ſource of his mercies? But have you, my brethren, been ſenſible of this? How unmindful have you been of the Rock that begat you, and the God that formed you? This is the firſt of all ſins, and the fruitful parent of every particular tranſgreſſion. It was a heavy charge brought againſt a great prince by the prophet Daniel, ch. v. 23. laſt clauſe, "And the God in whoſe hand thy breath is, and whoſe "are all thy ways, haſt thou not glorified." Say ye men of the world, have you indeed acknowledged God, on whom you depend for every breath that you draw, for eve-

ry moment that you continue in exiſtence? I have often thought, that it was one of the greateſt evidences of the depravity of human nature, that an abundant and opulent ſtate on earth ſhould ſo generally lead to neglect of God. What is this, when interpreted, If I may ſpeak ſo, but that the greater our Maker's goodneſs is to us, commonly the leſs is our gratitude to him?

But I would ſpeak to thoſe whoſe conſciences are more enlightened, and who have not wholly forgotten the Lord. Are not you alſo chargeable with manifold omiſſions! What ſenſe of gratitude have you retained, and expreſſed, for innumerable mercies, ſpiritual and temporal, to yourſelves, and to your families? How unequal the payment of gratitude to the debt of obligation! What uſe have you made of them in God's ſervice? What advantage have you reaped, for your own ſanctification, from the bounty of Providence, from the ſtrokes of Providence, from the ordinances of divine inſtitution, from the truths of the everlaſting goſpel, from ſeaſons of inſtruction, and opportunities of worſhip, from edifying examples, from faithful admonitions? What have you done for the good of others? How often have you relieved the neceſſitous, comforted the diſtreſſed, inſtructed the ignorant, admoniſhed the negligent, puniſhed or reſtrained the profane? I hope I ſpeak to many who have not been wholly negligent in improving their time and talents; yet ſurely there is juſt ground of humiliation to the beſt, that even under a conviction of duty, they have ſo imperfectly diſcharged it; and probably the very perſons who have done moſt, will be moſt ſincerely grieved that they have not done more.

Alas! my brethren, it is a great miſtake to think light of ſins of omiſſion. How much do I pity the condition of thoſe thoughtleſs perſons, who, forgetting that they were made to ſerve God, ſeem to live for no other purpoſe than to enjoy themſelves! And oh the miſerable deluſion of thoſe ſinners who ſet their minds at eaſe by the ſilly excuſe, That they do harm to none but themſelves! Let them hear and tremble at the tenor of the ſentence in the great day, Matth. xxv. 30. "Caſt ye the unprofitable "ſervant into outer darkneſs: there ſhall be weeping and

"gnashing of teeth." It is the first duty of natural religion, "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name;" and it is the sum of all the duties of the gospel, 1 Cor. vi. 19. 20. "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with "a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in "your spirit, which are God's."

2. Consider in how many instances you have been guilty of express transgressions of the law of God, his law written upon your hearts, and repeated in his own word. If you know any thing at all of the law of God in its spirituality and extent, you must be deeply convinced of your innumerable transgressions, in thought, in word, and in deed. (1.) How many are the sins of your thoughts? Sin is seated in the heart: it hath its throne and dominion there. Every enormity in the life takes its rise from the impurity of the heart. None will think light of sins of the heart, who have any acquaintance with the word of God. Let them but reflect upon the account given of the guilt of the old world, Gen. vi. 5. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was "great in the earth, and that every imagination of the "thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Let them reflect upon the saying of the wise man, Prov. iv. 23. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are "the issues of life;" or on the distinguishing character of God, Jer. xvii. 10. "I the Lord search the heart, I try "the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, "and according to the fruit of his doings."

How many thoughts are there in your hearts admitted and entertained, dishonorable to God, unthankful for his mercies, impatient under his providence? How many thoughts envious, malicious, spiteful, towards your neighbor? How many wanton, lascivious thoughts, and irregular desires? How many covetous, worldly, vain, ambitious thoughts? Let me beseech you also to consider, that these are not sins that we fall into seldom, or by occasional temptation, but multitudes break in upon us every day, and in a manner every hour. What an infinite number, then, must we be chargeable with in twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years! If so many are the sins of a single

day, what muſt be the guilt of a whole life? What reaſon to cry out, with the prophet to Jeruſalem, "How long "ſhall vain thoughts lodge within us?"

(2.) Let me beſeech you to conſider the ſins of the tongue. Here I ſhall not inſiſt much on the groſſer ſins of the tongue, lying, ſlandering, backbiting; of theſe, though few will be ſenſible they are guilty themſelves, all are abundantly ready to complain, as reigning in the world in general. Neither ſhall I inſiſt on impure converſation, filthy and laſcivious expreſſions, or alluſions to obſcenity; though I am afraid many here preſent are far from being innocent of the charge. But beſides theſe, the ſins of the tongue are ſo many, that the moſt watchful Chriſtian cannot ſay he is guiltleſs. Even the meek Moſes was provoked to ſpeak "unadviſedly with his lips." The apoſtle James has given us a very ſtrong deſcription, both of the general prevalence, and miſchievous influence, of the ſins of the tongue, James iii. 2.—8. "For in many things "we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the ſame "is a perfect man, and able alſo to bridle the whole body. "Behold, we put bits in the horſes mouths, that they may "obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold "alſo the ſhips, which though they be ſo great, and are "driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a "very ſmall helm, whitherſoever the governor liſteth. "Even ſo the tongue is a little member, and boaſteth "great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire "kindleth. And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: "ſo is the tongue amongſt our members, that it defileth "the whole body, and ſetteth on fire the courſe of nature; "and it is ſet on fire of hell. For every kind of beaſts, "and of birds, and of ſerpents, and things in the ſea, is "tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: but the tongue "can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly "poiſon." And that none may preſume, after all, to think theſe ſins of the tongue inconſiderable, let us remember what our Saviour tells us, Matth. xii. 36, 37. "But I ſay unto you, that every idle word that men ſhall "ſpeak, they ſhall give account thereof in the day of

" judgment. For by thy words thou ſhalt be juſtified, and " by thy words thou ſhalt be condemned."

(3.) Now, to theſe ſins of heart and converſation, let us add the conſideration of all the ſins of our actions, by which we either offend God, ourſelves, or are the means, by a doubtful or ſuſpicious example, of inducing others to offend him: all the acts of inſobriety and intemperance with regard to ourſelves; of injuſtice, treachery, or oppreſſion, with regard to others. Let us conſider thoſe ſins to which we are led by our reſpective callings and employments, or by our reſpective ages or tempers, or by our ſituation, and the ſociety with which we ſtand connected. The lightneſs and frothineſs of ſome, the ſourneſs and moroſeneſs of others, the inconſiderateneſs and folly of youth, the plotting and ambitious projects of riper years, the peeviſhneſs and covetouſneſs of old age, and the vanity and ſelfiſhneſs we carry with us through the ſeveral ſtages and periods of life. Theſe things are moſt, if not all of them, ſins in themſelves, and do infallibly betray us into a great number of others. If we conſider all this with any meaſure of attention, can we refuſe to adopt the language of the holy ſcripture, that our ſins are more in number than the hairs upon our heads, or than the ſand that is upon the ſeaſhore? In fine, if we conſider the ſins we are guilty of, according to our conditions and relations in the world, as huſbands and wives, parents and children, maſters and ſervants, magiſtrates and ſubjects, miniſters and people, we ſhall find the account ſo prodigiouſly ſwelled, that we ſhall have more than reaſon to cry out with the Pſalmiſt, " Lord, if thou ſhouldſt mark iniquities, O Lord, who " ſhould ſtand?"

3. Conſider the ſins that cleave to your religious duties, and every thing you do in obedience to the will of God. The pureſt worſhipper on earth muſt aſk forgiveneſs for the ſins even of his holy things. I am not here to inſiſt upon the hypocritical performances of many profeſſing Chriſtians, done merely, or chiefly, to be ſeen of men, or ſpread, as a covering, over their hidden and ſhameful deeds; nor am I to mention that religious zeal which ariſes from ſtrife, contention, and vain-glory, and

which chiefly aims at the ſupport of party names; becauſe theſe are directly and eminently ſinful: they are an abomination in the ſight of God. But, my brethren, even in thoſe performances which you go about with ſome meaſure of ſincerity, how many defects are to be found? Oh! how much negligence, coldneſs, and formality, in worſhip! how many wandering, vain, idle, and worldly thoughts, in your hearts, when your bodies are in the houſe of God! Conſider only the infinite glory and majeſty of God, in whoſe ſight the heavens themſelves are not clean, and who charges his angels with folly; and ſay whether you have ever prayed at all with becoming reverence of ſpirit. Conſider only the unſpeakable condeſcenſion of that God to his creatures, and the unſearchable riches of his grace to the ſinner; and ſay, whether your hearts have ever been ſuitably affected with his love.

It is our duty, my brethren, to conſider, how far we have been from preaching the word of God with proper impreſſions of the majeſty of him in whoſe name we ſpeak; how far we have done it with ſimplicity and dignity, neither fearing the cenſure, nor courting the applauſe, of our fellow-ſinners; how far we have done it with that tenderneſs and affection, with that holy fervor and importunity, which the value of thoſe precious ſouls to whom we ſpeak manifeſtly demands. And is it not your buſineſs to conſider, how ſeldom you hear with that attention, reverence, humility, and love, with which the ſacred and important truths of the everlaſting goſpel ought to be received; how many hear much more as judges than as learners, as critics rather than as ſinners; and content themſelves with marking the weakneſs of an indifferent, or praiſing the abilities of an animated ſpeaker? And how many run with itching ears from one congregation to another, or even from one party or profeſſion to another, not that they may be edified, but that curioſity and fancy may be gratified? How many loſt ordinances, how many miſſpent ſabbaths, have we to lament before God?

When we come to the ſecond table of the law, how many ſinful motives mix their influence in the duties we

perform to our neighbors? how many acts of juſtice owe their being, in part at leaſt, to fear of reproach? how many works of charity owe their ſplendor to a deſire of applauſe, as well as to a better principle? I ſhould never have done, were I to go through all the great duties of the Chriſtian life, and obſerve the ſinful defects that cleave to them. I believe I may ſay with great truth, that would we but deal faithfully, there would be no more neceſſary to our humiliation, than a ſtrict examination of our duties themſelves. This would oblige us to confeſs, that "all our righteouſneſſes are as filthy rags before God;" that we muſt not plead for reward, but forgiveneſs; that no merit of our own, but infinite mercy alone, muſt be the foundation of our hope.

III. I come now to make ſome practical application of the ſubject, for your inſtruction and direction. And,

1. How great is the deceitfulneſs of ſin! how aſtoniſhing the blindneſs of ſinners! How eaſy and obvious is the conſideration of our ſins, in the order which I have endeavored to ſet them before you! Sins of omiſſion, on the one hand, and of commiſſion, on the other; and duties faulty in both reſpects, viz. by eſſential qualities neglected, and ſins mixed with the performances: ſins in thought, in word, and in deed, againſt God, our neighbor, and ourſelves. Yet, alas! how many are there in a great meaſure ignorant of the ſins they are chargeable with, and therefore ſleeping in ſecurity! Think, my beloved hearers, on your condition. To know your danger, is the firſt ſtep to deliverance. Is not the law of obedience clear, written upon all the Creator's works? Is it not ingraven upon the conſcience? and is it not often repeated and inforced by the diſpenſations of Providence? Would there be ſo much of divine judgment, if there was no offence? Every natural evil proclaims the ſin of man. An inclement ſeaſon, an injurious world, and a frail, dying body, conſpire in pointing out our ſinful ſtate. And yet, after all, how blind is the ſinner to the diſcovery, how deaf to the friendly warning, how regardleſs of the ap-

proaching trial! Awake, I beſeech you, while there may be peace, and look upon your danger, while there is yet given you time and opportunity to fly from it.

2. If the holieſt cannot ſtand before God, if no fleſh living can be juſtified in his ſight, how fearful muſt be the ſtate of thoſe who are lying under the guilt of atrocious, aggravated, and repeated crimes! Though great profligates often deſert the ordinances of God, that they may ſin at greater eaſe, and meet with leſs reſiſtance; yet, in ſo numerous an aſſembly as this, there is reaſon to ſuppoſe there are not a few of the *chief of ſinners;* the rather, that while ſome deſert the ordinances, that they may have eaſe from within, others attend them as a cover, that they may blind their neighbors, and meet with leſs ſuſpicion or diſturbance from without. How, then, can murderers, fornicators, ſwearers, drunkards, thieves, and retainers of unjuſt gain, hear what hath been ſaid on this ſubject without trembling for themſelves! Hear for your ſouls ſake; hear for eternity's ſake; hear, I beſeech you, for Chriſt's ſake. O that the Spirit of God may carry home the truth, and make it "quick and powerful, ſharper "than a two-edged ſword," Heb. iv. 12. It is an eaſy thing for you now to diſſemble the ſins which men would puniſh, and even to boaſt of the ſins which men muſt tolerate; but hear and remember the two following paſſages: Heb. iv. 13. "All things are naked, and opened "unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do;" and, Heb. x. 31. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands "of the living God."

3. In the *laſt* place, If any chriſtian deſires to keep his conſcience tender and faithful, to have a deep growing and humbling ſenſe of his own ſinfulneſs; if he would bar the gate againſt the entrance of pride, or baniſh it after it has obtained admiſſion; if he deſires to walk humbly and watchfully—let him live as in the preſence of God, let him often ſiſt himſelf at his awful tribunal. It is eaſy to juſtify ourſelves before men, who have ſo little to require, and from whom ſo much may be concealed. The truth is, it is not a great matter to be able to ſet the world at defiance. But to look up to that God who ſitteth upon

the throne of his holineſs, is of infinitely greater moment, and of infinitely greater difficulty. He trieth the reins and the heart. He abhorreth evil. You ſee how Job defended himſelf againſt the accuſations of his friends, held faſt his integrity, and would not let it go; but no ſooner did God ſpeak to him in the greatneſs of his power, than he confeſſed his vileneſs, and laid his hand upon his mouth. In the ſame manner, he that would guard againſt the impoſitions of a deceitful heart, that would not be abuſed by flattering friends, or led aſtray by a miſtaken world; that would rather walk in the path of penitence than ſecurity; let him live as in the preſence of God. And happy, happy they, who take confuſion of face to themſelves now, and ſeek for mercy through the blood of the atonement, in compariſon of thoſe who juſtify themſelves now, but ſhall ſtand at laſt with unutterable confuſion before the ſupreme judge, ready to pronounce the irreverſible ſentence.

HOPE of FORGIVENESS with GOD.

A

SERMON.

PSALM cxxx. 4.

But there is forgiveness with thee; that thou mayest be feared.

AFTER conſidering our own miſerable and guilty ſtate, and how little any plea which we can offer will avail before the holineſs and juſtice of God, it is proper to turn our eyes to his mercy, as the only foundation of our hope and peace. This is of the utmoſt neceſſity to every penitent. When a ſenſe of ſin hath truly taken hold of the conſcience, it is ſo intolerable, that no man can continue long in that condition. When the waves and billows of divine wrath are going over him, he muſt either faſten upon ſome ground of hope, or ſuffer ſhipwreck upon the rocks of deſpair. There are indeed, alas that we ſhould be ſo liable to deluſion! many ways of weakening the force of conviction, and obtaining a temporary, imperfect, or falſe peace. But the only ſafe and ſtable ground of hope is the divine mercy. And happy the ſinner who obtains ſuch diſcoveries of its extent and efficacy, as to make him cleave to it with undivided affection, and reſt upon it as the anchor of his ſoul, from which he is reſolved never to depart.

Believe it, Chriſtians, the more the ſinner looks into his own ſtate, the more real and thorough his acquaintance with his own heart is, the more he finds, that not the leaſt ray of hope can ariſe from that quarter. This is preciſely the import of the Pſalmiſt's declaration in this

paſſage, taking the one branch of it in connection with the other; as if he had ſaid, When I conſider how great and multiplied my tranſgreſſions have been, I muſt ſtand ſpeechleſs, and without excuſe, before thy holy tribunal, and juſtify thee, although thou ſhouldſt condemn me. But Lord, thou art a God of infinite mercy. This I fix upon as the foundation of my hope. I ſee nothing in myſelf to plead. Thy law accuſes me. My own conſcience paſſes ſentence upon me. I am not able to ſupport the view of thy juſtice and holineſs. Whither can I fly, but to thy mercy? Here I deſire to take refuge, and to my unſpeakable conſolation there is forgiveneſs with thee; ſo that thou mayeſt and oughteſt to be feared. in diſcourſing further on this ſubject, which I intend to do in a manner entirely practical, I propoſe, in a dependence on divine grace, to follow this method.

1. I ſhall give a brief view of the diſcoveries which God hath made of his mercy, as the foundation of the ſinner's hope; or, in other words, ſhew what reaſon we have to believe, that there is forgiveneſs with him.

2. I ſhall point out the connection between the mercy of God and his fear; or explain the import of this expreſſion, "There is forgiveneſs with thee, that thou mayeſt "feared."

3. I ſhall make ſome practical improvement of the ſubject.

I. Firſt, then, let us attempt to give a brief view of the diſcoveries which God hath made of his mercy, as the foundation of the ſinner's hope; or, in other words, ſhew what reaſon we have to believe, that there is forgiveneſs with him. For this purpoſe I obſerve, firſt of all, that the patience and forbearance of God towards ſinners, in the courſe of his providence, is the effect of his mercy. Even this affords ſome faint hope, that there may be forgiveneſs with him. See the reaſoning or the expoſtulation of Jonah on the reſpite of the deſtruction of Nineveh, Jonah iv. 2. "And he prayed unto the Lord, and ſaid, "I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my ſaying, when I "was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto

" Tarſhiſh : for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and " merciful, ſlow to anger, and of great kindneſs, and " repenteſt thee of the evil." The ſentence being ſuſpended, there is time given to apply for pardon, and ſpace for the exerciſe of repentance, with a peradventure, or who can tell, whether he may not be gracious. We may add to this, his continual benignity and kindneſs to all his creatures, not excepting the evil, the unthankful, and the unholy. The native tendency of both theſe is to lead the guilty to repentance, as we are told, Rom. ii. 4. " Or deſpiſeſt thou the riches of his goodneſs and for- " bearance, and long-ſuffering, not knowing that the " goodneſs of God leadeth thee to repentance?" But though this ought to be mentioned, I am very ſenſible, how inſufficient it is of itſelf to give conſolation to a wounded ſpirit. Taking in the whole plan of providence, there are ſo many tokens of our Creator's diſpleaſure, ſo much to be ſeen of the juſtice and holineſs, as well as of the goodneſs of God, that it muſt leave the ſinner ſtill under a dreadful uncertainty in a matter of ſuch infinite concern. Torn by the ſuſpicion which is inſeparable from guilt, he is full of reſtleſs anxiety; and knowing that he muſt ſhortly appear before God in an unembodied ſtate, he is often putting this queſtion to himſelf, Wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord? How ſhall I be able to ſtand in the judgment? And therefore,

2. God hath revealed himſelf in his word, as merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, and ſlow to anger. This was the great truth on which the ſinner's hope depended ever ſince the apoſtaſy of our firſt parents. Never ſince that time could any man produce his title to divine favor in his own obedience: and therefore the mercy of God early intimated in the firſt promiſe, continued to make, if I may ſpeak ſo, the leading part of the divine character in all the diſcoveries he made of himſelf. Thus, at the giving of the law, Exod. xxxiv. 5, 6, 7. " And the Lord de- " ſcended in the cloud, and ſtood with him there, and " proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord paſſ- " ed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The " Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, and

" abundant in goodneſs and truth. Keeping mercy for " thouſands, forgiving iniquity and tranſgreſſion and ſin, " and that will by no means clear the guilty; viſiting the " iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the " childrens children, unto the third and to the fourth ge- " neration." To the ſame purpoſe the Pſalmiſt David, Pſal. ciii. 8. " The Lord is merciful and gracious, ſlow to " anger, and plenteous in mercy." Hear alſo the prophet Micah; Micah vii. 18. " Who is a God like unto " thee, that pardoneth iniquity; and paſſeth by the tranſ- " greſſion of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth " not his anger for ever, becauſe he delighteth in mercy."

I do not here ſtay to conſider what hints were given in the ancient diſpenſation, of the atonement which was afterwards to be made by the incarnation of the Saviour. Doubtleſs there was ſome reſpect to this in the very firſt promiſe of the *ſeed of the woman*, and alſo in the promiſe to Abraham, that in his *ſeed* all nations of the earth ſhould be bleſſed. The ſame thing was prefigured by the ſacrifices, and ſhadowed out by many different rites of the Moſaic œconomy. It muſt, however, be allowed, that the faithful in thoſe ages ſaw it only obſcurely, and of conſequence underſtood it very imperfectly. But it was on the revealed mercy of God, which they were obliged to ſeek in the way appointed by himſelf, that they placed their entire dependence.

I cannot help obſerving to you, how very encouraging the aſſurances of pardon are through many paſſages of the Old Teſtament; how very gracious the invitations to the ſinner, as if they had been contrived on purpoſe to remove the jealouſy which the guilty are too apt to entertain; Iſ. i. 18. " Come now and let us reaſon together, ſaith the " Lord: though your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be as " white as ſnow; though they be red like crimſon, they " ſhall be as wool." Iſ. xliii. 25. " I, even I am he that " blotteth out thy tranſgreſſions for mine own ſake, and " will not remember thy ſins." Iſ. xliv. 22. " I have " blotted out as a thick cloud, thy tranſgreſſions, and as a " cloud, thy ſins: return unto me, for I have redeemed " thee." Iſ. lv. 1. " Ho, every one that thirſteth, come

" ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, " buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without " money, and without price." Is this the word of God? Are theſe paſſages written for our benefit? Is there any thing more plain, than that God is merciful and gracious; nay that he delighteth in mercy? How great encouragement is this to the exerciſe of repentance? In this very view, indeed, it is urged by the prophet in the 6th and 7th verſes of the laſt cited chapter, " Seek ye the Lord " while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is " near. Let the wicked forſake his way, and the un- " righteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto " the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our " God, for he will abundantly pardon."

I ſhall only add, that as the ſcripture every where bears teſtimony to the readineſs of God to pardon returning ſinners, ſo there are alſo many paſſages in which he declares his readineſs to pardon the failings which continue to cleave to his own people, and treat them with the utmoſt tenderneſs and grace: Pſ. ciii. 13. " Like a father pitieth " his children, ſo the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Iſ. xl. 11. " He ſhall feed his flock like a ſhepherd: he " ſhall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in " his boſom, and ſhall gently lead thoſe that are with " young." Mal. iii. 17. " And they ſhall be mine, ſaith " Lord of hoſts, in that day when I make up my jewels, " and I will ſpare them as a man ſpareth his own ſon " that ſerveth him."

3. But that nothing may be wanting for the complete illuſtration of this truth, obſerve, that it appears in the cleareſt manner, from the goſpel of Chriſt, that there is forgiveneſs with God. In the fulneſs of time, God ſent his own ſon in our nature, to be a victim and ſacrifice for our offences, to bear our ſins in his own body on the tree. In this aſtoniſhing event, indeed, the love and mercy of God ſhines with the brighteſt luſtre: John iii. 16. " God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only be- " gotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould " not periſh, but have everlaſting life." In this great

tranſaction, we have not only an aſſurance of obtaining, but ſee the price paid for the purchaſe of our pardon: 1 Pet. i. 18. "For ye were not redeemed with corrup-"tible things, as ſilver and gold, from your vain conver-"ſation received by tradition from your fathers." Inſtead of finding the juſtice of God ſtand in the way of our reconciliation and peace, juſtice being fully ſatisfied, ſeals the pardon, and adds to the comfort of the ſinner. In the infinite value of this atonement, we may ſee the extent of the divine mercy. In the infinite power of this Saviour, we may ſee the perfect ſecurity of thoſe who put their truſt in him. Salvation, in all its parts, is offered to the chief of ſinners: ſo that, as the apoſtle expreſſes it, Heb. vi. 18. "That by two immutable things, in which "it was impoſſible for God to lie, we might have a ſtrong "conſolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon "the hope ſet before us."

II. I proceed now to the ſecond thing propoſed; which was, to point out the connection between the mercy of God and his fear, or explain the import of this expreſſion, "There is forgiveneſs with thee that thou mayeſt be "feared." The import of this expreſſion muſt be a little different, as we underſtand the word *fear*, which is ſometimes taken in a larger, and ſometimes in a more limited ſenſe. Sometimes, as being ſo eminent a part, it is made uſe of to ſignify the whole of religion; ſometimes it ſignifies that awe and veneration of the ſacred majeſty of God with which every one of his ſervants ought to be habitually poſſeſſed. I ſhall briefly conſider it in both theſe views, there not being the leaſt oppoſition between them, and both carrying in them the moſt important and ſalutary inſtruction.

If we take the fear of God in the text to ſignify the whole of that duty and obedience we owe to him, then the connection between forgiveneſs with God and his being feared, appears from theſe two conſiderations.

1. A diſcovery of the mercy of God is abſolutely neceſſary to his being loved and ſerved by thoſe who have once been ſinners. Deſpair of mercy drives the ſinner from God, preſents him only as the object of terror and averſion; and, inſtead of having the leaſt influence in

bringing us to obedience, confirms the guilty in his rebellious oppoſition to his Maker. This muſt be manifeſt to every hearer. There can be no religion at all, either in inclination or performance, if there be no forgiveneſs with God. How ſhould any ſo much as attempt what they believe to be an unprofitable labour?

Though this is a truth which none will deny, I am afraid it is a truth not ſufficiently attended to, either in its certainty or influence. It tends greatly to illuſtrate the whole plan of ſalvation, by the riches of divine grace, or the free, unmerited, unſolicited, love of God. How much does it add to the beauty and meaning of ſeveral paſſages of ſcripture! as 1 John iv. 10. "Herein is love, "not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and ſent "his Son to be the propitiation for our ſins." Rom. v. 8. "But God commendeth his love towards us, in that "while we were yet ſinners, Chriſt died for us." And the 10th verſe of the ſame chapter, "If when we were "enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of "his Son; much more being reconciled, we ſhall be ſa-"ved by his life." Guilt is of a ſuſpicious nature. It is even obſerved in offences committed by one man againſt another, that he who hath done the injury is always hardeſt to be reconciled. The ſame thing appears very plainly in the diſpoſition of ſinners towards God. A gloomy fear, a deſpondent terror, greatly hinders their return to him; nor can they ever take one ſtep towards him, till, by the diſplay of his mercy, this inſuperable obſtruction is removed.

2. As a diſcovery of the mercy of God is abſolutely neceſſary to our ſerving him at all, ſo it is perhaps of all others the moſt powerful motive to induce us to ſerve him in ſincerity. Nothing whatever more illuſtrates the divine glory. It preſents him as the proper object of worſhip, of confidence, and of love. When a ſinner is once burdened with a ſenſe of guilt, ſees the demerit of his tranſgreſſions, and feels the juſtice of his own ſentence, what an inconceivable relief muſt it give him to ſee the divine mercy! and how infinitely amiable muſt this God of mercy appear in his eyes! Others may reaſon at their eaſe upon the ſubject, he is tranſported with unſpeakable joy on

the proſpect. His heart is immediately taken captive: he feels its conſtraining power, and yields himſelf willingly to every demand of duty and gratitude. See, to this purpoſe, the expreſſions of the prophet Hoſea, ch. xi. 4. "I "drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love, and "I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their "jaws, and I laid meat unto them." The ſame thing is every where in the New Teſtament repreſented as the great commanding principle of obedience, 2 Cor. v. 14. "For the love of Chriſt conſtraineth us, becauſe we thus "judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." 1 John iv. 16. "And we have known and believed the "love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that "dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." And verſe 19. of the ſame chapter, "We love him, be-"cauſe he firſt loved us."

But further, even taking fear in a more limited ſenſe, as ſignifying a holy reverence and dread of the power and majeſty of God, there being forgiveneſs with him, is ſo far from weakening, that it ſtrengthens this fear; and that on the two following accounts.

1. The infinite obligations we lie under to divine mercy, muſt ſerve to improve our ſenſe of the evil of ſin, as committed againſt ſo good and ſo gracious a God, and to increaſe our abhorrence of it. The mercy of God to the guilty, at the ſame time that it brings unſpeakable conſolation, as delivering them from the wrath to come, ſerves to humble them, by a view of their own unworthy and undutiful conduct. When an awakened convinced ſoul, under the apprehenſion of eternity approaching, begins to contemplate the mercy of God as the ground of forgiveneſs, he immediately thinks upon this mercy, as having all along ſpared him in the midſt of his provocations. What a wonder of mercy is it, does he ſay to himſelf, that I was not immediately cut off in my wickedneſs, at ſuch a time, or at ſuch a time, which now return full upon his memory! He cannot eaſily ſeparate the remembrance of paſt crimes from the mercy that with-held immediate vengeance. And ſurely nothing will ſerve more to make the ſinner tremble and ſtand aſtoniſhed at his

own guilt, than reflection on that forbearance of a patient God, which did not doom him to inſtant and deſerved deſtruction, but ſpared him to hear the glad tidings of peace.

Thus the unſpeakable grace of God in the goſpel opens the ſprings of penitential ſorrow, and makes them flow more ſweetly indeed, but more freely, and more copiouſly than before. You may obſerve the ſtrong picture of penitence and love, which is drawn with inimitable beauty by the evangeliſt Luke, ch. vii. 37, 38. "And "behold a woman in the city, which was a ſinner, when "ſhe knew that Jeſus ſat at meat in the Phariſee's houſe, "brought an alabaſter-box of ointment, and ſtood at his "feet behind him weeping, and began to waſh his feet "with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, "and kiſſed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment." Was it not in grace and mercy that the ſuffering Saviour looked upon Peter, which immediately confounded him? Luke xxii. 61, 62. "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter; and Peter remembered the "word of the Lord, how he had ſaid unto him, Before the "cock crow, thou ſhalt deny me thrice. And Peter went "out, and wept bitterly." What is it elſe that is repreſented by the prophet as having ſo ſtrong an effect upon the believer in producing penitential ſorrow, but the love of our Redeemer? Zech. xii. 10. "And I will pour upon "the houſe of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jeruſa"lem, the ſpirit of grace and of ſupplications, and they "ſhall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they "ſhall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only ſon, "and ſhall be in bitterneſs for him, as one that is in bit"terneſs for his firſt-born."

2. Forgiveneſs with God tends to increaſe our fear and reverence of him, from the manner in which, and the condition on which it is beſtowed. Every circumſtance in this diſpenſation of divine mercy is calculated to abaſe the ſinner, and leave him nothing whereof to glory before God. Forgiveneſs is always declared to be an act of ſovereign grace, Iſ. xliii. 25. "I, even I am he that blotteth "out thy tranſgreſſions for mine own ſake, and will not "remember thy ſins." We are many times cautioned

againſt imputing to ourſelves, or our own merit, what is merely the effect of divine mercy. If the ſcripture is read with care, there will be obſerved many paſſages which carry this inſtruction in them, to beware of taking merit to ourſelves from the divine goodneſs, or any effect or expreſſion of it: Deut. ix. 4, 5. "Speak not thou in thine heart, "after that the Lord thy God hath caſt them out from be- "fore thee, ſaying, For my righteouſneſs the Lord hath "brought me in to poſſeſs this land: but for the wicked- "neſs of theſe nations the Lord doth drive them out from "before thee. Not for thy righteouſneſs, or for the up- "rightneſs of thine heart, doſt thou go to poſſeſs their land; "but for the wickedneſs of theſe nations the Lord thy God "doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may "perform the word which the Lord ſware unto thy fathers, "Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob." Ezek. xxxvi. 21, 22. "But I had pity for mine holy name, which the houſe of "Iſrael had profaned among the heathen, whither they "went. Therefore ſay unto the houſe of Iſrael, Thus "ſaith the Lord God, I do not this for your ſakes, O houſe "of Iſrael, but for mine holy name's ſake, which ye have "profaned among the heathen, whither ye went."

It is probably alſo with this view, if we may preſume to offer an opinion on ſo deep a ſubject, that the objects of ſpecial mercy are ſometimes choſen from among the moſt criminal, even the chief of ſinners. Does not this forbid, in the ſtrongeſt terms, every man to harbor the leaſt thought, as if by his own righteouſneſs, or being comparatively leſs wicked than others, he had been intitled to the divine favor: Rom. ix. 15.——18. "For he ſaith to Mo- "ſes, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and "I will have compaſſion on whom I will have compaſſion. "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that "runneth, but of God that ſheweth mercy. For the ſcrip- "ture ſaith unto Pharaoh, Even for this ſame purpoſe "have I raiſed thee up, that I might ſhew my power in "thee, and that my name might be declared throughout "all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he "will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."

But the circumſtances on which we are called chiefly to

fix our attention, is, that forgiveneſs is beſtowed only through the blood of Chriſt. It is freely and graciouſly beſtowed upon the ſinner, but was dearly and hardly purchaſed by the ſurety. This is no new or unuſual ſubject in this congregation. But Oh! my brethren, that we could in ſome meaſure apprehend its infinite importance. Think, I beſeech you, on the holineſs and juſtice of God, as they ſhine in the ſufferings and croſs of Chriſt: that a righteous God required full ſatisfaction for ſin; that "the "Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all;" that "it "pleaſed the Lord to bruiſe him, and to put him to grief." Are not the majeſty and purity of God ſet forth in this tranſaction, in the moſt clear and legible, nay in the moſt awful and terrible characters? for they are written in blood. Is the Lord to be praiſed for his mercy? and is he not alſo to be feared for his juſtice? May we not, or rather muſt we not, ſay, "If ſuch things were done in the "green tree, what ſhall be done in the dry?" If God ſaw it neceſſary to lay ſuch a load of wrath upon the Holy One, when ſtanding in the room of ſinners, what ſhall be the condition of the impenitent tranſgreſſors, who ſhall lie under it forever? We may well adopt the words of Moſes to the children of Iſrael, Deut xxviii. 58, 59. "If thou "wilt not obſerve to do all the words of this law that are "written in this book, that thou mayſt fear this glorious "and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD; then "the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the "plagues of thy ſeed, even great plagues, and of long "continuance, and ſore ſickneſſes, and of long continu-"ance."

Do you not now, my brethren, ſee much propriety, as well as inſtruction, in this language, "But there is for-"giveneſs with thee, that thou mayſt be feared?" The expreſſion indeed is not ſingular in the holy Scripture, even in the ſenſe now illuſtrated. It is certainly on the ſame ſubject the Pſalmiſt is ſpeaking, when he ſays, Pſ. xl. iii. "And he hath put a new ſong in my mouth, even praiſe "unto our God: many ſhall ſee it, and fear, and ſhall "truſt in the Lord." As alſo the prophet Hoſea, ch. iii. 5. "Afterward ſhall the children of Iſrael return, and ſeek

" the Lord their God, and David their king, and ſhall fear " the Lord, and his goodneſs in the latter days."

III. I proceed now to make ſome practical improvement of what hath been ſaid. And,

1. From what hath been ſaid, you may learn, that none can underſtand, embrace, or eſteem the mercy of God, but thoſe who are convinced of their ſin and miſery. Mercy can be of benefit only to the guilty; mercy can be beſtowed only on the guilty; and therefore all that can be ſaid in illuſtration of the divine mercy, all that can be ſaid in commendation of the divine mercy, will be eſteemed as idle tales by thoſe who do not know themſelves to be guilty. Hence the negligence and unconcern with which the goſpel is received. Very many of thoſe to whom it is addreſſed are inſenſible of their danger. The employments of the world ingroſs their time; the enjoyments of the world poſſeſs their affections: an eternal, unchangeable ſtate is ſuppoſed at too great a diſtance to require their attention. I beſeech you, my brethren, to conſider, that the time of your trial is waſting apace. Let the commencement of another ſeaſon * put you in mind of its ſpeedy paſſage, and perſuade you to look forward to the day of death or judgment, when all offers of mercy, and exhortations to repentance, ſhall ceaſe, and when, though there may be forgiveneſs with God to all the proper objects of it in his extenſive dominion, yet there ſhall be no forgiveneſs for you.

2. From what hath been ſaid you may obſerve, that the publication of divine mercy, that the illuſtration of the riches of divine grace in the goſpel, hath not the leaſt tendency to leſſen our ſenſe of the evil of ſin, or the obligation we lie under to obedience: on the contrary, it ſerves greatly to improve both the one and the other. When we endeavor to bring conſolation to the broken in heart; when we ſet before them the tender mercies of our God, and the infinite compaſſion of the Saviour; when we preſs them to hearken to the invitations of the goſpel; when we encourage them to reſt their ſalvation upon it, and to

* Preached at the beginning of the year.

be at peace; this only ſerves to excite their indignation againſt ſin, and perſuade them to fly from it, to bring them to the obedience of children, and ſhed abroad the love of God in their hearts.

3. From what hath been ſaid, you may ſee the difference between a real and ſcriptural diſcovery of forgiveneſs with God, and that careleſs ſecurity which ariſes from a preſumptuous reliance on his general mercy. The one prevents conviction, the other produces it. The general and common plea of God's mercy, keeps the ſinner at eaſe as he is; but a real and ſcriptural diſcovery of forgiveneſs with God, heals the broken in heart, and at the ſame time increaſes their ſenſe of the evil of ſin, and their abhorrence of every approach to it.

Preſumption, and ſuch views of God's mercy as are taken by the ſecure, ariſe entirely from the extenuation of ſin. The language of their hearts is, "Surely this is not ſo great a matter, but God's mercy will forgive it." If you will either ſeriouſly examine yourſelves, or obſerve, with ſome attention, the diſcourſe of careleſs worldly perſons, you will perceive this very clearly. They comfort themſelves with the thoughts of their little comparative guilt, rather than of the certainty and greatneſs of divine mercy. "I may perhaps," ſays one of them, "have been "guilty of ſuch or ſuch ſins; but I am ſure I never did ſo or "ſo," or perhaps as ſome others who immediately occur to their minds as greater ſinners than themſelves. I cannot help mentioning to you the ſaying of a prince of our own country towards the cloſe of life, who had been a remarkable libertine in his younger years: "I cannot "think," ſays he* "that God will be ſo hard as to damn "a man for taking a little pleaſure out of the common "road."

In oppoſition to this, the true penitent ſees more than ever his inexcuſable guilt as a ſinner, but hopes for forgiveneſs from God, as the effect of his own infinite grace, and the accompliſhment of his promiſe in the goſpel. He gives the whole glory of it to him; and never thinks of dimi-

* K. Charles II. to Biſhop Burnet.

niſhing the luſtre of his tranſcendent mercy, by covering or extenuating the offence. Hence ſecure perſons are eaſily ſatisfied, while true penitents make ſupplication with ſtrong crying and tears. They are often reconſidering the promiſe, and frequently queſtioning the ground on which their dependence has been placed. Hence alſo ſecure perſons ſeek eaſe to themſelves from the remonſtrances of conſcience, by ſtifling conviction, and offering excuſes; but true penitents, by giving full force to the accuſation, and pleading the benefit of the remiſſion. To ſay all in a word, the one ſtruggles hard to be found innocent, the other to obtain mercy.

4. From what hath been ſaid, you may ſee of how much moment it is to the Chriſtian to keep clear views of the mercy of God, as well as of his own intereſt in it. The moment he loſes the comfortable ſenſe of peace with God, his chariot-wheels are troubled, and he drives heavily. It makes his duty burdenſome, and his trials inſupportable. And no wonder, ſince he is not ſo far left of God as to return to the ſecurity of ſinners; and at the ſame time the ſource of his inward conſolation is like *a ſpring ſhut up, and a fountain ſealed.* For what end are the promiſes of God contained in ſcripture? why are they put into your hands? why are they repeated in your ears? Why, but for preſerving you in that peace which the world cannot give, and which, bleſſed be God, it cannot take away. Here what your Saviour ſays John xvi. 33, "Theſe "things I have ſpoken unto you, that in me ye might have "peace. In the world ye ſhall have tribulation: but be "of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

5. In the laſt place, You may ſee from what hath been ſaid, in what way you may moſt effectually, and moſt certainly, preſerve your peace with God, *viz.* By the frequent exerciſe of penitence and confeſſion. This will ſhew you the neceſſity of forgiveneſs from God. This will conſtrain you daily to ſeek for forgiveneſs from God. Beware of ſeeking or preſerving peace by the extenuation of ſin, or by ſtifling conviction. This may well lead you to ſloth and ſecurity for a ſeaſon, which lays the foundation of the bittereſt repentance of all; but will never give

you the comfort of God's children. He that ſhutteth his eyes upon his own ſins, ſhall never ſee the glory of divine mercy. Serious, voluntary, deliberate humiliation, is the true way of promoting both that ſteadineſs in duty, and that peace with God, which ought to be the Chriſtian's ſupreme deſire. Whatever deſtroys ſelf-ſufficiency promotes the growth of true piety. The goſpel is particularly directed to thoſe that ſee their neceſſity. It brings comfort to the mourner, help to the miſerable, and mercy to the guilty. It is a great miſtake to think, that the contrition and penitence of the children of God is hurtful to their comfort, for it is the very foundation of it; according to that refreſhing promiſe, with which I ſhall conclude, If. lxi. 1, 2, 3. "The ſpirit of the Lord God "is upon me, becauſe the Lord hath anointed me to "preach good tidings unto the meek, he hath ſent me to "bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the "captives, and the opening of the priſon to them that "are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, "and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all "that mourn: to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, "to give unto them beauty for aſhes, the oil of joy for "mourning, the garment of praiſe for the ſpirit of heavineſs, that they might be called trees of righteouſneſs, the "the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified."

THE NATURE OF FAITH.

A SERMON.

1 JOHN iii. 23.

And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.

ACTION SERMON.

WE propoſe, in a little, to draw near to God in the moſt ſolemn act of Chriſtian worſhip. With what humble ſolicitude ought we to enquire, whether we are truly intitled to this great privilege, or may hope for acceptance in this important duty. It is the moſt explicit, and the moſt public profeſſion we can make of faith in the Redeemer's blood; and therefore none can do it in a proper manner, but thoſe who have indeed believed in the Redeemer's name.

Faith in Chriſt is the great foundation of our peace with God. It is the great principle of our ſanctification. It is the great diſtinction between the heirs of glory and the heirs of hell: "For he that believeth, and is baptized, "ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not, ſhall be damn-"ed." And therefore no ſubject can be of more importance in general, or more ſuited to our preſent employment, than what is preſented to us in the words of the text: *This is his commandment, That we ſhould believe on the name of his Son Jeſus Chriſt.*

In the context the apoſtle is ſpeaking of the Chriſtian's confidence or perſuaſion of his relation to God, ver. 20, 21,

22. "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than "our heart and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart "condemn us not, then have we confidence towards "God. And whatſoever we aſk, we receive of him; be- "cauſe we keep his commandments, and do thoſe things "that are pleaſing in his ſight."

Having thus mentioned the commandments, he points out in the words now read, the great commandments of the goſpel, in their order, *And this is his commandment, That we ſhould believe on the name of his Son Jeſus Chriſt, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.* My purpoſe at this time is, to confine myſelf to the firſt of theſe; and open, in as comprehenſive and practical a manner as I am able, what it is *to believe on the name of Jeſus Chriſt the Son of God*; and having done ſo, to make ſome practical improvement of the ſubject; particularly, by preſſing every hearer, in the moſt earneſt manner, to obey this *commandment* of God.

I. In the *firſt* place, then, I am to explain what it is to believe on the name of Jeſus Chriſt the Son of God. Many have been the controverſies raiſed and agitated on this ſubject, moſt of them unprofitable, and ſome of them very hurtful, as tending to diſquiet and perplex the minds of ſerious perſons, and ſometimes even to furniſh an objection to the enemies of the goſpel. I ſhall therefore avoid every thing of this kind, as in general undeſirable, and at this time highly unſeaſonable; and endeavor to lay it down in ſuch a manner as I hope may be underſtood by the meaneſt real Chriſtian, and may afford to every exerciſed ſoul inward conſolation and peace with God.

For this purpoſe, I hope it will be ſufficient to obſerve, that faith may be conſidered in two views; its object, and its actings: 1ſt, *The object of faith*; that is to ſay, the truths to be believed: 2dly, *The actings of faith*; or what it is to believe theſe to the ſaving of the ſoul. As to the object of faith, it is thus expreſſed in our text, *This is his commandment, That we ſhould believe on the name of his Son Jeſus Chriſt. Chriſt Jeſus, the Saviour*, then, is

the object of faith. This, in its full extent, includes every thing that is revealed in the holy ſcriptures, with reſpect to his perſon, character, and work. It may indeed be ſaid to include the whole revealed will of God; becauſe every part of this will has a more remote or immediate reference to him. Chriſt Jeſus is "the Alpha and Omega, the firſt "and the laſt, the beginning and the ending," of the will of God as revealed for our ſalvation. But as every thing elſe was only introductory and preparatory to his atonement, or conſequent upon it, I ſhall chiefly direct your attention to him as a Saviour from guilt and pollution. This the name of Jeſus immediately imports: Matth. i. 21. "And "thou ſhalt call his name Jeſus: for he ſhall ſave his "people from their ſins." In this view, I think the object of faith may be ſummed up in the following particulars.

1. That we are, by nature, in a ſtate of ſin, alienated in heart from God, tranſgreſſors of his law, and liable to his wrath. If this were not the caſe, a *Saviour* would not be neceſſary; *ſalvation* would be a word without force, and even without meaning. It is accordingly found in experience, that till there be a conviction of this truth upon the conſcience, the tidings of a Saviour are always treated with neglect or diſdain. Nothing can be ſtronger than the language of ſcripture on this ſubject in many paſſages; particularly, Matth. xviii. 11. "For the Son of man is come "to ſave that which was loſt." Luke v. 31, 32. "And "Jeſus anſwering, ſaid unto them, they that are whole, "need not a phyſician; but they that are ſick. I came "not to call the righteous, but ſinners to repentance." I ſhall alſo read to you the account of our natural ſtate, and the end of Chriſt's coming, given by the apoſtle Paul, Eph. ii. 1.——5. "And you hath he quickened who "were dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, wherein in time paſt "ye walked according to the courſe of this world, accord- "ing to the prince of the power of the air, the ſpirit that "now worketh in the children of diſobedience. Among "whom alſo we all had our converſation in times paſt, in "the luſts of our fleſh, fulfilling the deſires of the fleſh, "and of the mind; and were by nature the children of "wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy,

" for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we " were dead in ſins hath quickened us together with Chriſt, " (by grace ye are ſaved)." I forbear to mention the proof of this from the hiſtory of the world, from the marks of God's diſpleaſure againſt ſin in the courſe of providence, and from the teſtimony of conſcience, as I have illuſtrated them at conſiderable length in other diſcourſes. Let it ſuffice at preſent to ſay, that the firſt truth which is the object of faith, is the guilt and miſery of our nature.

2. The next part of the object of faith is, that there is no way of recovery from this ſtate but by Chriſt: Acts iv. 12. " Neither is there ſalvation in any other; for there is " none other name under heaven given among men where- " by we muſt be ſaved." If there were any other, it would not be the command of God that we ſhould believe in the name of his Son Jeſus Chriſt. After men are in ſome meaſure ſenſible that they are guilty, it is often difficult to convince them that they are helpleſs. There is ſomething ſo mortifying in this conſideration, and ſo humbling to our pride, that it is with great unwillingneſs we yield to it. Nay, after we have ſeemed to confeſs it, we are often ready to retract it. The ſinner has always a proneneſs to ſeek ſome reſource in himſelf. Hence the diſpoſition to extenuate his guilt; and if he cannot plead abſolute, to place ſome dependence upon comparative innocence. Hence the diſpoſition to magnify human merit, as if, by the value of ſome good deeds, we could balance or cancel the guilt of our diſobedience. Hence the endleſs variety of human inventions, of coſtly ſacrifices and voluntary penance. Micah vi. 6, 7. " Wherewith ſhall I " come before the Lord, and bow myſelf before the high " God? ſhall I come before him with burnt-offerings, " with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleaſed " with thouſands of rams, or with ten thouſands of rivers " of oil? ſhall I give my firſt-born for my tranſgreſſion, the " fruit of my body for my ſoul?" The truth is, till the ſinner is ſtript of every plea, and found to be without excuſe, he will ſtill refuſe to be indebted to the grace of his Redeemer. But hear ye the Spirit of God, Rev. iii. 17, 18. " Becauſe thou ſayeſt, I am rich, and increaſed with

" goods, and have need of nothing; and knoweſt not that " thou art wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and blind, " and naked. I counſel thee to buy of me gold tried in " the fire, that thou mayeſt be rich; and white raiment, " that thou mayeſt be clothed, and that the ſhame of thy " nakedneſs do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with " eye-ſalve, that thou mayeſt ſee."

3. This leads me to the third part of the object of faith, *viz.* That the pardon of ſin, and peace with an offended God, is freely offered to the chief of ſinners through Chriſt. The two preceding truths are preparatory to this, and ſerve to point out its neceſſity and moment. This is the gracious meſſage which was brought into the world by the goſpel; and from which it derives its name, importing glad tidings. What we are particularly to attend to here is, (1.) that Chriſt Jeſus was ſubſtituted in the room of ſinners, and ſuffered, the juſt for the unjuſt, that he might bring us to God; that the holineſs and juſtice of God required an expiation of ſin, which was made by this immaculate victim: Iſ. liii. 5, 6. " But he was wounded " for our tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our iniquities: " the chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him, and with " his ſtripes we are healed. All we like ſheep have gone " aſtray; we have turned every one to his own way, and " the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Rom. iii. 25. " Whom God hath ſet forth to be a pro- " pitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his " righteouſneſs for the remiſſion of ſins that are paſt, " through the forbearance of God." (2.) Another thing alſo to be obſerved, is the conſtitution of the ſufferer's perſon. It was no leſs than the eternal and only begotten Son of God. This is a circumſtance of the utmoſt moment, and on which the greateſt ſtreſs is manifeſtly laid in ſcripture. It is included in the words of the text: " This is his commandment, That we ſhould believe on " the name of his Son Jeſus Chriſt." It is alſo con- " ſtantly found in the early Confeſſions of Faith; John i. 49. " Nathaniel anſwered and ſaid unto him, Rabbi, " thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Iſrael."

Matth. xvi. 16. "And Simon Peter anſwered and ſaid, "Thou art Chriſt, the ſon of the living God." Acts viii. 37. "And Philip ſaid, If thou believeſt with all "thine heart, thou mayeſt. And he anſwered and ſaid, "I believe that Jeſus Chriſt is the Son of God." Unleſs this is attended to, we ſhall neither be ſufficiently ſenſible of the evil of ſin, which required ſuch an atonement, nor of the love of God which provided it, nor of the power of the Saviour to execute it; nor can we have ſuch encouragement to put our truſt in it.

From theſe two circumſtances you may be directed to contemplate the leading and principal object of faith, *viz.* the only begotten Son of God dying in our room, and purchaſing our pardon. Jeſus, the mediator of the new covenant, having finiſhed his work, invites weary and heavy-laden ſinners to come unto him; and aſſures them, that the higheſt demands of the law are anſwered, that their debt is fully paid, and nothing is now to be laid to their charge: Rom. viii. 33, 34. "Who ſhall lay any "thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that juſ- "tifieth: Who is he that condemneth? It is Chriſt that "died, yea rather, that is riſen again, who is even at "the right hand of God, who alſo maketh interceſſion "for us." Rev. xxii. 17. "And the Spirit and the "bride ſay, Come. And let him that heareth, ſay, Come. "And let him that is athirſt, come: and whoſoever will, "let him take the water of life freely."

4. In the laſt place, The object of faith is the power of Chriſt to renew our natures, to deliver us from the bondage of corruption, and bring us into the glorious liberty of God's children. We muſt never ſeparate the Redeemer's merit and his power. Conviction is imperfect unleſs we ſee our ſlavery, as well as miſery, and unfeignedly deſire deliverance from both. Neither do we properly apprehend the extent of Chriſt's undertaking, unleſs we view him exalted as a prince and a Saviour to give repentance to Iſrael, and remiſſion of ſins. There are two things equally eſſential to the goſpel upon this particular. (1.) The neceſſity of being ſanctified. Salvation in ſin is not promiſed; ſalvation or happineſs in ſin is not poſſible;

and therefore all who hope for ſalvation through Chriſt, muſt be renewed in the ſpirit of their minds. Thenceforth they muſt not ſerve ſin: 2 Cor. v. 17. "If any "man be in Chriſt, he is a new creature: old things are "paſſed away, behold, all things are become new." If the wrath of God is revealed againſt all ungodlineſs of men, it muſt ſtill abide on the children of diſobedience.

(2.) The other thing to be obſerved is, that the ſanctification of the believer is the purchaſe of Chriſt's blood, and the work of his Spirit. This is plain through the whole of the ſcriptures both of the Old Teſtament and the New. Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26, 27. "Then will I ſprinkle "clean water upon you, and ye ſhall be clean; from all "your filthineſs, and from all your idols will I cleanſe "you. A new heart alſo will I give you, and a new "Spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the "ſtony heart out of your fleſh, and I will give you an "heart of fleſh. And I will put my Spirit within you, "and cauſe you to walk in my ſtatutes, and ye ſhall keep "my judgments, and do them." John xv. 4, 5. "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear "fruit of itſelf, except it abide in the vine; no more "can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are "the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, "the ſame bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye "can do nothing." Nothing can be ſtronger than the language uſed on this ſubject: "His grace is ſufficient for "us; his ſtrength is made perfect in weakneſs." "By "the grace of God," ſays the Apoſtle, "I am what I am." And again, "Not I, but the grace of God which was "with me." Nay, he is ſaid "to work in us both to "will and to do of his good pleaſure." All this ſhows, that there is no room left for the ſinner to glory; but that the whole of his loſs by the fall, both his integrity and his happineſs, may be recovered, and can only be recovered through Chriſt. This is the ſum of evangelical truth, this is the ſource of evangelical holineſs: Gal. ii. 16.—20. "Knowing that a man is not juſtified by the works "of the law, but by the faith of Jeſus Chriſt, even we "have believed in Jeſus Chriſt; that we might be juſti-

" fied by the faith of Chriſt, and not by the works of the " law; for by the works of the law ſhall no fleſh be juſ- " tified. But if while we ſeek to be juſtified by Chriſt, " we ourſelves alſo are found ſinners, is therefore Chriſt " the miniſter of ſin? God forbid. For if I build again " the things which I deſtroyed, I make myſelf a tranſgreſ- " ſor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I " might live unto God. I am crucified with Chriſt: " nevertheleſs I live; yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me: " and the life which I now live in the fleſh, I live by the " faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave him- " ſelf for me."

I proceed now, in the ſecond place, to conſider the actings of faith, or what is implied in believing theſe truths to the ſaving of the ſoul. And I cannot help obſerving to you, that it is but in compliance with common cuſtom, or at leaſt with the preſent ſtate of things, that I ſay much upon this part of the ſubject. I am perſuaded it is of much more conſequence, and much more proper, to direct you to the object of faith in God's revealed will, to explain it in all its extent, and to preſs it with all the evidence that attends it, than to examine curiouſly into, and diſtinguiſh nicely upon the nature of faith, as it is an act of the human mind. I do not find, that the ſcripture ſays much upon the act of believing; but it is in a manner wholly employed in telling us *what* we ought to believe, both with regard to our apoſtaſy and recovery. We do indeed read in ſcripture of believing with all the heart. We read alſo of a temporary faith in the ſtony-ground hearers; and of the ſtrength and weakneſs of faith. But all this ſeems, at leaſt chiefly, to relate to the firmneſs or uncertainty of our perſuaſion of, or aſſent to the truths which are addreſſed to us in the name of God. The ſimpleſt view of faith ſeems to be receiving " the record " which God hath given us of his Son." Agreeably to this, the reverſe of faith in ſcripture is doubting: Matth. xiv. 31. " O thou of little faith, wherefore didſt thou " doubt?" Matth. xxi. 21. Jeſus anſwered and ſaid " unto them, Verily I ſay unto you, If ye have faith and " doubt not, ye ſhall not only do this which is done to

" the fig-tree, but alſo, if ye ſhall ſay unto this mountain, " Be thou removed, and be thou caſt into the ſea; it ſhall " be done."

But, my brethren, ſince there have been queſtions upon this ſubject, and ſince it is certain from experience that there is a deceitfulneſs in the human heart, and a ſuppoſed faith, which yet is vain and fruitleſs, I ſhall obſerve, that the actings of faith may be reſolved into the three following particulars, or that the faith of God's elect will diſcover itſelf by the three following effects.

1. A firm aſſent of the underſtanding to what is revealed of Chriſt in ſcripture; particularly as ſummed up in the preceding part of this diſcourſe: That you believe the loſt and helpleſs ſtate of man by nature and practice: That Chriſt is able to ſave to the uttermoſt; and that he hath made effectual proviſion, both for expiating your guilt and purifying your hearts. Perhaps you will think this is eaſy, and be ready to ſay, that you have from your youth given, and that you do at this moment give, entire credit to the whole. But, my brethren, there is more here than you are aware of: there is a great difference between a common and traditionary belief, which was never tried, and that inward and perſonal conviction which dwells in the heart, and therefore will govern the life. If any man believe, that all the poſterity of Adam are in a ſtate of guilt and miſery, one would think it unavoidable that he muſt perceive his own danger as a part of the whole; and yet I am perſuaded, it is uſually a perſonal conviction of guilt and danger by the law upon the conſcience that firſt opens the ſinners eyes upon the general truth; and then his own intereſt makes it bulk in his apprehenſion, and raiſes in him an earneſt ſolicitude, both to examine into the cauſe of the diſeaſe, and to aſk after the method of cure.

There is another way of conſidering the aſſent of the underſtanding to divine truth. The teſtimony of faith is oppoſed to the teſtimony of ſenſe. Faith tells us, that our only happineſs is in the favor of God, and that this can only be obtained through Chriſt; that eternity is coming on; and that there is no time to be loſt. Senſe, on the other hand, tells us, that the world is good, that its delights

are pleaſant and that our comfort is here; not forgetting to repreſent the ſervice of God as a burden and drudgery. In the mean time, the corrupt principle within, aſſents to the deluſion, and aſſiſts in blinding the mind; adding, that whatever may be in religion, the danger may be warded off by a late repentance. It is not enough then to give a cold and general aſſent to the truths of religion when they are not contradicted, but to believe the teſtimony of faith, in oppoſition to the ſuggeſtions of ſenſe; or, in other words, *to walk by faith, and not by ſight.* That this may be brought to the teſt, I obſerve,

2. That faith implies the conſent and approbation of the heart to every truth with regard to Chriſt's perſon and character, and ſalvation through his blood. To every believer, the plan of redemption by the Mediator of the new covenant, appears not only true, but wiſe, reaſonable, gracious, and neceſſary. This, my brethren, particularly diſtinguiſhes true faith, not only from unbelief and ſecurity, but from an empty and barren profeſſion. The careleſs deſpiſe the truth, the believer adores it; the half Chriſtian is aſhamed of it, the believer glories in it: "God forbid," ſays the apoſtle, Gal. vi. 14. "that I ſhould glory ſave in "the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt." 1 Pet. ii. 7. "Unto "you therefore which believe, he his precious: but unto "them which be diſobedient, the ſtone which the builders "diſallowed, the ſame is made the head of the corner."

I believe indeed it is uſually a deep and heartfelt conviction of danger, which firſt perſuades the ſinner of the truth, and makes the trembling penitent a willing believer. But becauſe there may be ſometimes a belief of that truth, which we do not eſteem, nay, even a jealouſy and ſuſpicion of the truth of what we inwardly hate, I have added, that faith implies the conſent and approbation of the heart. The whole doctrine of redemption appears to the believer moſt admirably calculated to promote the glory of God, and ſecure the ſalvation of ſinners. Even what bears hardeſt upon man, taking away the foundation of ſelf-righteouſneſs and ſelf-dependence, appears to him perfectly reaſonable: he not only ſubmits to it, but embraces and cloſes with it. He ſees the law to be holy; he con-

feſſes the threatening to be juſt; and he is not only content, but thankful, that his preſent deliverance and future ſecurity depend, not on himſelf, but on the Redeemer. He is willing to be only and eternally indebted to the unmerited mercy and ſovereign grace of God in Chriſt Jeſus.

Thus you ſee the doctrine of ſalvation is repreſented in ſcripture under the form of a bleſſing to be received, as well as a truth to be believed: Iſ. lv. 1, 2, 3. "Ho, every "one that thirſteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath "no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine "and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore "do ye ſpend money for that which is not bread? and "your labor for that which ſatisfieth not? hearken dili-"gently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let "your ſoul delight itſelf in fatneſs. Incline your ear, and "come unto me; hear, and your ſoul ſhall live, and I "will make an everlaſting covenant with you, even the "ſure mercies of David." Matth. xi. 28. "Come unto "me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give "you reſt." And indeed the inſpired writers always ſpeak of it in ſuch terms as ſhew themſelves not only ſatisfied of the truth, but deeply penetrated with a ſenſe of the greatneſs of the mercy; Eph. iii. 17, 18, 19. "That Chriſt may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted "and grounded in love, may be able, to comprehend with "all ſaints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and "height; and to know the love of Chriſt, which paſſeth "knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulneſs "of God."

3. In the laſt place, faith implies ſuch a perſonal application of the truths of the goſpel as produceth repoſe of conſcience, dependence and reliance on the Saviour. This, my brethren, is the point firſt in view, and the termination of the whole; and I cannot help thinking, that it is ſo eſſential to faith, that faith and truſt are often put reciprocally for one another in the New Teſtament; as in Eph. i. 12, 13. "That we ſhould be to the praiſe "of his glory, who firſt truſted in Chriſt. In whom ye "alſo truſted after that ye heard the word of truth, the goſ-

" pel of your ſalvation: in whom alſo after that ye believ-
" ed, ye were ſealed with that holy Spirit of promiſe."

I do not mean to ſay, that divine faith is a belief that Chriſt died for me in particular. I know the ſtrong objections which lie againſt that form of expreſſion. The object of faith is, that Chriſt died for loſt ſinners of the race Adam. But as it can hardly be ſuppoſed, that any give their aſſent to this truth till they are convinced that they themſelves are ſinners, ſo, if they believe that there is no ſalvation in any other, and that he is able to ſave to the uttermoſt, it ſeems to follow of neceſſity, that they will reſt and rely " upon him alone for ſalvation as he is offered
" in the goſpel." This is certainly the view given us of the matter in the holy ſcripture: Rom. v. 1. " There-
" fore being juſtified by faith, we have peace with God,
" through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt." Heb. vi. 18. " That
" by two immutable things, in which it was impoſſible for
" God to lie, we might have a ſtrong conſolation, who have
" fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope ſet before us."
Faith and deſpair are inconſiſtent. Faith and hope are inſeparable. The glory of the Redeemer's perſon, the perfection of his atonement, and his ability to ſave, are all ſet before us in the goſpel; and if we cannot rely upon him, if we cannot truſt our ſalvation in his hands, it certainly ariſes from ſome doubt or diſapprobation of theſe intereſting truths. If you doubt of the truth, it is no wonder that you diſtruſt the promiſe; but if you are truly and inwardly ſatisfied of Chriſt's power and mercy, you will cloſe with him, as your Saviour, and ſay unto him, in the words of Thomas, when his doubts were removed, " My Lord,
" and my God."——Thus I have ſhortly given you a view of the actings of faith: which may all be reduced to what I have endeavored to illuſtrate; the aſſent of the underſtanding, the approbation of the heart, and theſe jointly producing repoſe of conſcience and peace with God.

II. I proceed now, in the *laſt* place, to make ſome practical improvement of what hath been ſaid on this important ſubject. And, in the

First place, Hence learn the abſolute neceſſity of ſelf-denial, and how much it ought to prevail in the temper of a Chriſtian. In explaining to you the object of faith, I have endeavored to lay before you the nature of the goſpel-meſſage, and the ſubſtance of the truth as it is in Jeſus, *viz.* the loſt and helpleſs ſtate of man by nature, forgiveneſs through the blood of Chriſt, and ſanctification as the work of his Spirit. If this view is juſt, then religion muſt be begun, preſerved, improved, and perfected, by union with Chriſt. If this view is juſt, then all ſelf-righteouſneſs and ſelf-dependence is a denial of Chriſt. And indeed, ſuch is the life of a believer, if the conduct of the great apoſtle of the Gentiles may be taken for an example: Phil. iv. 13. "I can do all things through "Chriſt which ſtrengtheneth me."

2. Hence alſo learn the neceſſity of a new nature, in order to a new life. If the old nature is indeed in ruins, it will be loſt labor to begin to build without a new foundation. And if the foundation is ill laid, however beautiful the ſuperſtructure, the fabric cannot be laſting. The not attending to this is viſibly the cauſe of many miſcarriages. Men often reſolve upon ſome amendment of life, from prudence, conveniency, or even from imperfect convictions, and ſome apprehenſion of eternity itſelf. But though theſe reſolutions are formed with ſeeming ſincerity, inherent corruption ſoon becomes too ſtrong for ſuch feeble oppoſition. Remember therefore our Saviour's caution, "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or make "the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt." If you deſire to live a life of holineſs or virtue, apply to God through Chriſt, for the pardon of your ſins, and peace with him. Entreat of him alſo, in the ſame prevailing name, that by his grace he would implant in you "a new heart, and a "new ſpirit, that you may walk in his ways, and obſerve "his judgments to do them."

3. Learn alſo how injurious they are to the doctrine of ſalvation by faith in Chriſt, who ſlander it as unfriendly to holineſs of life. So far from being unfavorable to holineſs, it makes the moſt effectual proviſion for it. Obedience to

the whole law of God, is embraced by every believer as his choice, and promiſed as his duty; only he expects to derive ſtrength from his Redeemer to enable him to diſcharge it. I deſire to bear witneſs, and ſo will every faithful miniſter of the New Teſtament, that Chriſt came not to deſtroy the law, but to fulfil it. He hath not only left it in its full force upon the conſcience, but he hath added to its obligation. The awful ſanction of the law ſhall take place upon every impenitent ſinner. It is well repreſented by the flying roll, in the prophecies of Zechariah, chap. v. 3, 4. "Then ſaid he unto me, This is the curſe that goeth "forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that ſtealeth, ſhall be cut off as on this ſide, according to it; and every one that ſweareth, ſhall be cut off as on that ſide, accor- "ding to it. I will bring it forth, ſaith the Lord of hoſts, and "it ſhall enter into the houſe of the thief, and into the houſe "of him that ſweareth falſely by my name; and it ſhall re- "main in the midſt of his houſe, and ſhall conſume it, "with the timber thereof, and the ſtones thereof." See alſo the ſuperadded ſanction of the goſpel, Heb. x. 28, 29, "He that deſpiſed Moſes law, died without mercy, under "two or three witneſſes: of how much ſorer puniſhment, "ſuppoſe ye, ſhall he be thought worthy, who hath trod- "den under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the "blood of the covenant, wherewith he was ſanctified, an "unholy thing, and hath done deſpite unto the Spirit of "grace?" Hear it, my brethren, hear it for your ſouls ſake, any known ſin allowed in the heart or converſation, is as inconſiſtent with ſalvation under the covenant of grace as under the covenant of works; or rather, to ſpeak more properly, as many as continue in the practice of ſin are *condemned already*, and remain under the power of that *miniſtration of death*. To delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man, is the fruit of faith, the character of the new nature, and neceſſary to fit you for the divine preſence.

4. Suffer me to ſay a few words, for the reproof and conviction of thoſe who are living in contempt of the goſpel. Alas! how many are there who turn a deaf ear to the moſt earneſt and preſſing invitations addreſſed to them

in the word of God, and enforced by his providence! There are two ſorts of deſpiſers of the goſpel. (1.) Thoſe who are open and avowed enemies to the doctrine of the goſpel, who deſert it, deſpiſe it, or ſlander it. Too many there are of this character in the preſent age, to whom the croſs of Chriſt is fooliſhneſs. O! how deplorable is their folly! and how aggravated their guilt! If this is the divine commandment, That we ſhould believe in the name of the Son of God; and if there is truth in the divine word, "That there is no ſalvation in any other;" miſerable indeed muſt be the ſtate of thoſe who are found thus fighting againſt God. Will it be a light thing to be found deſpiſers of all that grace and love manifeſted in the goſpel? How heavy is the threatening, in our Saviour's own words, againſt thoſe who deſpiſe the *precious corner stone*, and *tried foundation*, which is laid in Zion, Matth. xxi. 44. "And whoſoever ſhall fall on this ſtone, ſhall be bro-"ken; but on whomſoever it ſhall fall, it will grind him "to powder. (2.) They are deſpiſers of the goſpel who, profeſſing belief in the doctrine of Chriſt, continue to live in unrighteouſneſs. He came to turn you from all your tranſgreſſions, as well as to deliver you from condemnation. His power is particularly illuſtrated in bringing ſinners "from darkneſs to light, and from the power of "Satan unto God." The end of his coming is loſt as to all thoſe who continue in ſin. If they are called by his name, they are a ſcandal to it; if they form any hopes from his ſufferings, they will be diſappointed; if they advance any claim to his mercy, it will be rejected; if they plead relation to him, he will openly renounce them: Matth. vii. 21, 22, 23. "Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, "Lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he "that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven. "Many will ſay to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not "propheſied in thy name? and in thy name have caſt out "devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? "and then will I profeſs unto them, I never knew you: "depart from me ye that work iniquity."

5. In the *laſt* place, Suffer me, in the moſt earneſt manner, to beſeech every ſinner in this aſſembly, to believe in the name of the Son of God. I ſay, every ſinner,

becauſe thoſe only who are ſenſible that they are ſinners, will be obedient to the call.

Are you not therefore ſenſible of your guilt and danger? Are your underſtandings ſo blinded? Is natural conſcience itſelf ſo ſeared, that you do not ſee how much you ſtand in need of a Saviour? Remember, that if there be any truth in the whole compaſs of natural and revealed religion that cannot be ſpoken againſt, it is this, That God "is of purer eyes than that he can behold iniquity;" and that, for this reaſon, "he will render to every man "according to his works. It is a truth engraven upon the conſcience, and ratified by the courſe of providence; the Heathens diſcovered it through the thickeſt darkneſs; and the guilty confeſs it by their daily fears. What a harveſt of converts would I bring in even in this aſſembly, if I could but lead to the Saviour every one that believes, in ſome meaſure, in a judgment to come! What an aſtoniſhing diſorder is brought into our nature by ſin? What a marvellous deluſion is upon the mind, and what inconſiſtency is there in the conduct of ſinners! It is hard to ſay, which of the two is moſt amazing; their backwardneſs to receive the truth, or their unwillingneſs to obey it; their inattention to evidence on the one hand, or their forgetfulneſs of what they do believe, upon the other. Is there any perſon within theſe walls, who doubts that he is to die; or who does not believe, that he muſt be judged after death? Are you then ready for the trial? Have you ſerved your Maker? Have you loved him above all? Have you lived to his glory? Have you ſought and placed your happineſs in his favor? Or are you ſenſible that iniquities have prevailed againſt you? Have they now taken hold upon you, ſo that you cannot lift your eyes? Behold, I preach peace to you by Jeſus Chriſt. Believe in his name and merits for your pardon; rely on his grace and Spirit for your reformation; and return to God, through him, as your unchangeable portion. This is the tenor of the goſpel: Luke xxiv, 46, 47. "Thus it is "written, and thus it behoved Chriſt to ſuffer, and to riſe "from the dead the third day: and that repentance and "remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached in his name, among "all nations, beginning at Jeruſalem."

CHRIST's DEATH A PROPER ATONEMENT FOR SIN.

A

SERMON.

1 JOHN ii. 2.

And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

ACTION SERMON.

My Brethren,

TO as many as have any belief of eternity, it muſt be a matter of unſpeakable moment to know, how they may have confidence towards God. This enquiry becomes, if poſſible, ſtill more ſerious, when we conſider man as in a lapſed and corrupt ſtate by nature, as guilty, and obnoxious to his Maker's righteous judgment. Then it becomes neceſſary, not only to preſerve the favor, not only to avoid the diſpleaſure, but to ſeek for ſome ſhelter or covering from the wrath of God.

This is the account given us of our condition in ſcripture; which, as it is a truth of the utmoſt importance, lying at the foundation of all religion, I have often endeavored both to explain and enforce. And happy, happy they who have heard with application; happy they whoſe eyes have been opened on their danger as ſinners; who have ſeen and felt the evil of ſin, as a departure from, and rebellion againſt a moſt holy, righteous and gracious God.

Happy they, who, rejecting the vain reaſonings of the carnal mind, and the cob-web-defences of the ſhort-ſighted creature, have been laid proſtrate as guilty and helpleſs, before the ſovereign and almighty Creator. All mankind, in the ſeveral ages of the world, have in general diſcovered ſuch a jealouſy of their condition, and have ſo far felt the reproof and condemnation of natural conſcience, that their attempts and inventions have been innumerable to appeaſe the offended Deity.

But bleſſed be the name of God, we are not left to any uncertainty as to this important queſtion. We may chearfully apply our minds to it, and receive unſpeakable conſolation "through the tender mercy of our God; whereby "the day-ſpring from on high hath viſited us." The way to life and peace is fully explained in the glorious goſpel of the Son of God. We are indeed, by nature, guilty ſinners, enemies to God in our minds, and by wicked works; but there is a gracious proviſion made for our recovery in the mediation of Chriſt. This is the ſtrong hold and refuge of the ſinner; it is the foundation ſtone and confidence of the believer. In the 8th and 9th verſes of the preceding chapter, the apoſtle John ſays, "If we ſay that we "have no ſin, we deceive ourſelves, and the truth is not "in us. If we confeſs our ſins, he is faithful and juſt to "forgive us our ſins, and to cleanſe us from all unrighteouſneſs." And in the verſe preceding the text, "My "little children, theſe things write I unto you, that ye "ſin not. And if any man ſin, we have an advocate "with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous." He then teaches the Chriſtian to live by faith in the Saviour's blood: *And he is the propitiation for our ſins.* And that he might further illuſtrate the extent and efficacy of the great atonement, he adds, *and not for ours only, but alſo for the ſins of the whole world.* In further diſcourſing on this ſubject, I propoſe, through the aſſiſtance of divine grace,

1. To conſider Chriſt as the propitiation for ſin, or what is implied in his being ſo called.

2. To conſider the extent of this propitiation, or its being for the ſins of the whole world. And,

3. To make ſome practical improvement of the ſubject.

I. Firſt, then, *Let us conſider Chriſt as the propitiation for ſin, or what is implied in his being ſo called.* We find our Saviour deſigned as a propitiation in ſeveral other paſſages of ſcripture; as in this epiſtle, chap. iv. 10. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he "loved us, and ſent his Son to be the propitiation for our "ſins;" and Rom. iii. 25. "Whom God hath ſet forth "to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." It is the opinion of many learned men, that Chriſt is called *a propitiation*, or *the propitiation*, in alluſion to the mercy-ſeat above the ark, which was ſet up at firſt in the tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple in the moſt holy place. To confirm this, it is obſerved, that the original word here uſed is the ſame which the Greek tranſlators of the Old Teſtament always uſe to denote the mercy-ſeat, and which the apoſtle to the Hebrews uſes when ſpeaking of the ſame ſubject, Heb. ix. 5. "And over it the cheru-"bims of glory ſhadowing the mercy-ſeat: of which we "cannot now ſpeak particularly." But I apprehend there is ſome inverſion of the order of things in this remark: for Chriſt is not called a propitiation in alluſion to the mercy-ſeat, which, independent of him, could ill bear that denomination; but the mercy-ſeat hath this title given to it becauſe it was an eminent type of Chriſt. It beautifully indeed repreſented the benefit which we derive from him as our propitiation. For as God, by the Shechinah, or ſymbol of his preſence, dwelt of old upon the mercy-ſeat, between the cherubims, and was from that place propitious to his people; ſo now God dwells in Chriſt, and by him reconciles ſinners to himſelf: 2 Cor. v. 19. "To wit, "That God was in Chriſt, reconciling the world unto "himſelf, not imputing their treſpaſſes unto them; and "hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." In that ancient diſpenſation, every worſhipper was to look toward the mercy-ſeat; and it was from thence that God accepted them, and gave intimations of their acceptance: ſo it is through Chriſt, or in his name, that we have now acceſs to God; and it is in him that he ſheweth us favor, and maketh us accepted; Eph. i. 6. "To the praiſe of "the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accept-

" ed in the beloved." It was from the mercy-ſeat that God ſpake to his people by the intervention of the high-prieſt, and by Urim and Thummim; ſo it is by his Son that God now ſpeaks to us, and ſhews us the way of ſalvation: Matth. xvii. 5. " This is my beloved Son, in " whom I am well pleaſed; hear ye him."

But the true and proper meaning of Chriſt's being a propitiation, is to be taken from the ſacrifices in general, and particularly points at his undertaking the office of mediator or peace-maker between God and man, and in that capacity ſuffering the wrath of God in the room of ſinners. By this he appeaſeth him, rendereth him propitious or gracious to us, and purchaſeth our pardon: Rom. iii. 25. " Whom God hath ſet forth to be a propitiation, " through faith in his blood." Remember how intimately it is connected with *redemption*, another expreſſion which runs through the whole of the New Teſtament,, and is conſidered as equivalent to the forgiveneſs of ſins: Eph. i. 7. " In whom we have redemption through his " blood, the forgiveneſs of ſins, according to the riches " of his grace." Now, redemption certainly ſignifies purchaſing or buying with a price.

The ſacrifices under the Moſaic economy did all of them imply a ſubſtitution in room of ſomething that had been forfeited, or was due. It is obſerved by one eminent for his knowledge of Jewiſh antiquities, that beſides what was done when any particular perſon preſented a ſin-offering, at the continual burnt-offering there were certain men appointed to repreſent the whole congregation of Iſrael. Their office was, to lay their hands upon the head of the lamb, and thus as it were transfer the guilt from the people to the victim. On this account they were called *ſtationary men*, becauſe they attended continually for this end. And as the very purpoſe of the ſacrifices under the law was, to typify the ſacrifice of Chriſt, they are a ſtanding evidence of the early and original reference to him, as the ground of divine mercy.

Nothing is more undeniably true, than that the offering of ſacrifices was both early and univerſal in every nation under heaven; and it is no leſs certain, that thoſe

who uſed them did conſider them as expiatory, or propitiatory, to render the offended Deity placable, and obtain his mercy. This was at once a confeſſion of guilt, and a declaration, that they apprehended the neceſſity and propriety of an atonement. Neither is it poſſible to account for the univerſal prevalence of ſacrifices in any tolerable manner, but by ſuppoſing, that they were the remains of what had been taught in the ages immediately after the fall, by divine appointment.

I apprehend it is alſo undeniably evident, that this is the light in which the ſacrifice of Chriſt is repreſented in the holy ſcriptures. How many paſſages might be adduced to this purpoſe? In ancient prophecy, this part of his work is ſet forth in the following manner, Iſ. liii. 4, 5. 6, 7, 8. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried "our ſorrows: yet we did eſteem him ſtricken, ſmitten "of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our "tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our iniquities: the "chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him, and with his "ſtripes we are healed. All we like ſheep have gone "aſtray: we have turned every one to his own way, and "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He "was oppreſſed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not "his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the ſlaughter, "and as a ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb, ſo he open-"eth not his mouth. He was taken from priſon and "from judgment: and who ſhall declare his generation? "for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the "tranſgreſſion of my people was he ſtricken." Dan. ix. 24. "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, "and upon thy holy city, to finiſh the tranſgreſſion, and "to make an end of ſins, and to make reconciliation for "iniquity, and to bring in everlaſting righteouſneſs, and "to ſeal up the viſion and prophecy, and to anoint the "moſt Holy."

In the New Teſtament, he tells us, he was to lay down his life for his people: John x. 11. "I am the "good ſhepherd: the good ſhepherd giveth his life for "the ſheep." The ſame thing he plainly ſays in the in-

ſtitution of the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper, Matth. xxvi. 26, 27, 28. "And as they were eating, Jeſus took "bread, and bleſſed it, and brake it, and gave it the "diſciples, and ſaid, Take eat; this is my body. And "he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, "ſaying, Drink ye all of it: for this is my blood of the "New Teſtament, which is ſhed for many for the re-"miſſion of ſins." That his body broken and blood ſhed for his people, was to be underſtood of his being made a ſin-offering, is plainly teſtified in the apoſtolic writings, 2 Cor. v. 21. "For he hath made him to be ſin for us, "who knew no ſin; that we might be made the righ-"teouſneſs of God in him." Gal. iii. 13. "Chriſt hath "redeemed us from the curſe of the law, being made a "curſe for us; for it is written, Curſed is every one that "hangeth on a tree." Heb. ix. 26, 27, 28. "But now "once in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put "away ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf. And as it is ap-"pointed unto men once to die, but after this the judg-"ment: ſo Chriſt was once offered to bear the ſins of "many; and unto them that look for him, ſhall he ap-"pear the ſecond time, without ſin, unto ſalvation." See alſo the aſſertion of the apoſtle Peter, 1 Pet. iii. 18. "Chriſt "alſo hath once ſuffered for ſins, the juſt for the unjuſt, "(that he might bring us to God) being put to death in "the fleſh, but quickened by the Spirit." It is evidently alſo on this account, that he is called the Lamb of God, and we are called to attend to him in that capacity, John i. 29. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away "the ſin of the world."

It is lamentable to think, that there ſhould be any who call themſelves Chriſtians, and yet refuſe to acknowledge this truth, which is woven, if I may ſo ſpeak, through the whole contexture, both of the law and goſpel. It brings to my mind the ſtory of an ancient artiſt; who, being employed to build a magnificent and elegant temple, had the ingenuity to inſcribe upon it his own name, and ſo to incorporate it both with the ornaments and body of the ſtructure, that it was impoſſible afterwards to efface the name, without at the ſame time deſtroying the fabrick.

In the ſame manner, Chriſt dying for ſin is engraven in ſuch characters through the whole revealed will of God, that it is impoſſible to take it away without overturning the whole ſyſtem. For this end Chriſt came into the world; for this end he bore the name of *Jesus*, or the *Saviour;* and for this end he became the high prieſt of our profeſſion, that he might, *by one offering, for ever perfect them that are sanctified.*

This then is the ſcripture-view of Chriſt as our propitiation, that our guilt is taken away, and we are reconciled to God through the ſacrifice which he hath offered without ſpot or blemiſh. And notwithſtanding all that has been thrown out againſt it by the pride of ſelf-righteouſneſs, there is nothing that can be juſtly oppoſed to it on the part of unprejudiced reaſon. God is merciful, but he is alſo juſt. And as there is nothing more inſeparable from the idea of ſin, and an accuſing conſcience, than merited puniſhment; ſo there is nothing more eſſential to the idea of juſtice in God, than a diſpoſition to inflict it. This the ſcripture every where declares; and the conſcience of the guilty, who dreads his Maker's preſence, ratifies the truth.

Now, if God ſhews mercy to the ſinner, is it ſo abhorrent from reaſon, that this ſhould be by a Mediator, if one can be found fit to ſtep in between the parties, and "lay "his hand upon them both?" Is not this neceſſary to manifeſt the righteouſneſs and ſeverity of the law, as well as the tenderneſs and compaſſion of the judge? Is not this preciſely the reaſon aſſigned for it in ſcripture? Rom. iii, 25. "To declare his righteouſneſs for the remiſſion of "ſins that are paſt, through the forbearance of God." It is trifling to ſay, that there is nothing of the paſſion of anger in God, that ſhould need to be appeaſed. Such expreſſions are only figurative, but they convey their meaning very clearly. It is not anger or revenge, as they appear in our diſordered frame, that accepts of an atonement. Theſe furious paſſions fly directly at the offending perſon, and reject all interceſſion. But juſtice, in calm and regular government, requires ſatisfaction, that the malignity and demerit of the offence may be preſerved, while mercy is

extended to the criminal. We ought to consider, that one great and general end of the dispensations of Providence is, to illustrate the glory of the true God in all his real perfections. This is best done by a purchased pardon, by a wise and awful mixture of impartial justice with unmerited mercy. How can you hear the word *mercy* so often without perceiving this? It is not mercy at all, unless it is bestowed on those who have deserved to suffer; and therefore why may not a voluntary surety be admitted to suffer in their place? The truth is, such are the impressions that are usually made on the awakened conscience, of the infinite holiness and purity, and the tremendous majesty of God, that nothing less will satisfy it than a sufficient atonement, or a clear view how he may be "just, "and yet the justifier of him that believeth on Jesus."

But, my brethren, it is one thing, to know, to profess, or even to support the truth; and another, but of unspeakably more moment, to feel, and to apply it. It is one thing, to have a rational conviction, from critical inquiry, that this is taught in the holy scriptures; and another, to cleave to it with esteem and affection, as *the gospel of our salvation*, as the great foundation of our hope and peace. Therefore, in what remains of this branch of the subject, I would consider myself as speaking, not to the wrangling disputer, but to the convinced sinner; not to the self-righteous boaster, but to the broken in spirit. The chief circumstances in the propitiation which Christ hath made, to be taken notice of in this view, are these two: 1. Its absolute necessity. 2. Its perfect sufficiency.

1. Consider the *absolute necessity* of this atonement. There is no other way by which the sinner can be restored to the favor of God. Nothing can be clearer from the holy scriptures. It is indeed the tacit inference that may be drawn from the whole. Why is this love and mercy of God celebrated in such exalted strains by the inspired writers, and felt with so much gratitude by the redeemed, but that they were under condemnation, and must have perished, but for the help of this Saviour? Rom. "viii. 1. There is therefore now no condemnation to "them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the

" fleſh, but after the Spirit." And the ſame chapter, ver. 33. " Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's " elect? It is God that juſtifieth." John iii. 16. " God " ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, " that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but " have everlaſting life." As " without ſhedding of blood " there is no remiſſion," ſo we have the ſame infallible teſti- " mony, Heb. x. 4. that " it is not poſſible that the blood " of bulls and of goats ſhould take away ſins." Nay, that the thing might be put beyond all poſſibility of doubt, ſee the declaration of Peter and John, Acts iv. 12. " Nei- " ther is there ſalvation in any other: for there is none " other name under heaven given among men whereby " we muſt be ſaved." And what other ſenſe can be put upon theſe words of our Saviour himſelf? John xiv. 6. " Jeſus ſaith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and " the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." In vain then do we found our hopes upon any thing elſe: The holineſs of the divine nature, the purity of the divine law, and the greatneſs of divine power, conſpire in blaſt- ing every hope of the ſinner but what is centred in Chriſt.

2. Conſider the *perfect ſufficiency* of this atonement. It is ſufficient to anſwer all the demands of law and juſ- tice. It is ſufficient to vindicate the honor of the divine government, and to illuſtrate the holineſs and juſtice of God in the forgiveneſs of ſin. It is ſufficient to purchaſe a full and complete remiſſion to the greateſt ſinner. Who- ever reflects upon the infinite wiſdom of God, muſt be ſenſible that it is not without reaſon that ſo much is ſaid on this ſubject in ſcripture; that ſo much pains is taken to ſet forth the glory and greatneſs of the Saviour of ſinners. The greatneſs of his perſon, and dignity of his character, are ſet before us in the moſt ſtriking light. He is " the eternal and only begotten Son of God; the bright- " neſs of the Father's glory, and the expreſs image of his " perſon." And Phil. ii. 6. " Who being in the form " God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." If. " ix. 6. For unto us a child is born, unto us a ſon is " given, and the government ſhall be upon his ſhoulder: " and his name ſhall be called, Wonderful, Counſellor,

" The mighty God, The everlaſting Father, the Prince of " peace."

It is not eaſy indeed to enumerate the magnificent titles with which he is adorned in ſcripture: *The Alpha and Omega,—The firſt and the laſt,—The Prince of the kings of the earth,—The King of kings, and Lord of lords,—The King of glory,*—and *The King of ſaints.* What mighty works are ſubſcribed to him in creation and providence! We are told, " He ſhall reign till all enemies are " are brought under his feet." The propriety of his ſacrifice as the Son of man, and the purity of his ſacrifice as the Holy one of God, are taken notice of in ſcripture; Heb. ii. 17. " Wherefore in all things it behoved him " to be made like unto his brethren; that he might be a " merciful and faithful high-prieſt, in things pertaining to " God, to make reconciliation for the ſins of the people." Heb. ix. 13, 14. " For if the blood of bulls, and of goats, " and the aſhes of an heifer ſprinkling the unclean, ſanc- " tifieth to the purifying of the fleſh; how much more " ſhall the blood of Chriſt, who through the eternal Spirit, " offered himſelf without ſpot to God, purge your con- " ſcience from dead works to ſerve the living God?" To this you may add the continued fulneſs that dwells in him; John i. 16. " And of his fulneſs have all we received, " and grace for grace." Col. i. 19. " For it pleaſed " the Father, that in him ſhould all fulneſs dwell." What is this, my brethren, but to encourage and embolden ſinners to put their truſt in him, and to carry home with power this truth, which I ſhall give you in the words of the Holy Ghoſt? Heb. vii. 25. " Wherefore he is able " alſo to ſave them to the uttermoſt, that come unto God " by him, ſeeing he ever liveth to make interceſſion for " them."

II. I proceed now to the ſecond thing propoſed, which was, to conſider the extent of this propitiation, founded on the laſt clauſe of the text: " And not for ours only, " but alſo for the ſins of the whole world." In general, when we remember that this epiſtle was written chiefly to the converts of the circumciſion, it may convince us, that in all probability this expreſſion was intended againſt the

great and national prejudice of the Jews, of which we ſee very frequent notice taken in the New Teſtament. As they had the oracles of God committed to them, as for the wiſe purpoſes of his providence he had ſeparated them from other nations, and the Meſſiah was to deſcend from them according to the fleſh, they apprehended that all the bleſſings of his reign were to be confined to themſelves: therefore they are often given to underſtand, that the purpoſe of mercy was far more extenſive, and that Chriſt came with a view to fulfil that promiſe made to the father of the faithful, Gen. xxii. 18. "In thy ſeed ſhall all the na- "tions of the earth be bleſſed; becauſe thou haſt obeyed "my voice." The expreſſion in the text then undoubtedly implies, that redemption through the blood of Chriſt was to be preached to ſinners of the Gentiles; that as he had been the Saviour of all ages by the efficacy of that ſacrifice which he was to offer in the fulneſs of time, ſo that the virtue of it was not to be confined to the houſe of Iſrael, but to belong to ſinners of every nation under heaven.

I am ſenſible, my brethren, that very great controverſies have been raiſed in another view, as to the extent of Chriſt's death, and the import of this and other ſuch general expreſſions in the holy ſcriptures. In this, as in moſt other debates, matters have been carried a far greater length than the intereſt of truth and piety requires; and, as is alſo uſual, they have ariſen from an improper and unſkilful mixture of what belongs to the ſecret counſels of the Moſt High with his revealed will, which is the invariable rule of our duty. Without entering, therefore, into theſe debates, which are unſuitable to our preſent employment, or rather giving my judgment, that they are for the moſt part unneceſſary, unprofitable, or hurtful, I ſhall lay down three propoſitions on this ſubject, which I think can hardly be called in queſtion, and which are a ſufficient foundation for our faith and practice.

1. The obedience and death of Chriſt is of value ſufficient to expiate the guilt of all the ſins of every individual that ever lived or ever ſhall live on earth. This cannot be denied, ſince the ſubjects to be redeemed are finite, the

price paid for their redemption is infinite. He ſuffered in the human nature, but that nature intimately and perſonally united to the divine; ſo that Chriſt the Mediator, the gift of God for the redemption of ſinners, is often called his own and his eternal Son: Rom. viii. 32. "He that "ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, "how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things?" Such was the union of the divine and human nature in Chriſt, that the blood which was the purchaſe of our redemption is expreſsly called the blood of God, Acts xx. 28. "To feed the church of God, which he hath purcha-"ſed with his own blood." This is the great myſtery of godlineſs, God manifeſted in the fleſh, in which all our thoughts are loſt and ſwallowed up.

2. Notwithſtanding this, every individual of the human race is not in fact partaker of the bleſſings of his purchaſe; but many die in their ſins, and periſh for ever. This will as little admit of any doubt. Multitudes have died, who never heard of the name of Chriſt, or ſalvation through him; many have lived and died blaſpheming his perſon, and deſpiſing his undertaking; many have died in unbelief and impenitence, ſerving divers luſts and paſſions; and if the ſcripture is true, he will at laſt render unto them according to their works. So that if we admit, that the works of God are known to him from the beginning of the world, it can never be true, that, in his eternal counſels, Chriſt died to ſave thoſe, who after all that he hath done, ſhall be miſerable for ever. "He is a rock, "his work is perfect." His deſign never could be fruſtrated; but, as the apoſtle Paul expreſſes it, Rom. xi. 7. "The election hath obtained it, and the reſt were blind-"ed." But,

3. There is in the death of Chriſt a ſufficient foundation laid for preaching the goſpel indefinitely to all without exception. It is the command of God, that this ſhould be done: Mark xvi. 15. "And he ſaid unto them, Go "ye into all the world, and preach the goſpel to every "creature." The effect of this is, that the miſery of the unbelieving and impenitent ſhall lie entirely at their own door; and they ſhall not only die in their ſins, but ſhall

ſuffer to eternity for this moſt heinous of all ſins, deſpiſing the remedy, and refuſing to hear the Son of God; Heb. x. 26, 27. "For if we ſin wilfully after that we have received "the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more ſa- "crifice for ſins, but a certain fearful looking for of judg- "ment, and fiery indignation, which ſhall devour the ad- "verſaries." Let us neither refuſe our aſſent to any part of the revealed will of God, nor fooliſhly imagine an oppoſition between one part of it and another. All the obſcurity ariſes from, and may be reſolved into the weakneſs of our underſtandings; but let God be true, and every man a liar. That there is a ſenſe in which Chriſt died for all men, and even for thoſe who periſh, is plain from the very words of ſcripture; 1 Tim. iv. 10. "For therefore "we both labour and ſuffer reproach, becauſe we truſt in "the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, eſpecially "of thoſe that believe." 1 Cor. viii. 11. "And through "thy knowledge ſhall the weak brother periſh, for whom "Chriſt died?" Thus it appears that both in a national and perſonal view, Chriſt is "the propitiation for our "ſins; and not for ours only, but alſo for the ſins of the "whole world."

III. I proceed now in the *laſt* place, to make ſome practical improvement of the ſubject for your inſtruction and direction. And,

1. From what hath been ſaid, let us be induced to give praiſe to God for his mercy to loſt ſinners revealed in the goſpel. Let us particularly give him praiſe for Chriſt Jeſus, his unſpeakable gift: "Herein is love, not that we loved "God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son to be the pro- "pitiation for us."

While we remember, with abaſement of ſoul, the holineſs and juſtice of God, which required ſatisfaction for ſin, let us alſo remember his infinite compaſſion, who was pleaſed himſelf to provide "a lamb for the burnt-offering." Let us at the ſame time give praiſe to the tender-hearted Saviour, who gave his life as an offering "of a ſweet- "ſmelling ſavor" to God. Redeeming grace ſhall be the theme of eternal gratitude and praiſe in heaven. After

all our trials and dangers are over, we ſhall then, with unſpeakable delight, aſcribe the honor of our victory to him, ſaying, Rev. v. 12. "Worthy is the Lamb that was "ſlain, to receive power, and riches, and wiſdom, and "ſtrength, and honor, and glory, and bleſſing." Why ſhould we not alſo attempt to give him praiſe in his church on earth? for he, having finiſhed his own work, and entered into his glory, hath given us an aſſured proſpect, that we alſo ſhall overcome in his ſtrength; that he will come again, and "receive us to himſelf; that where "he is, there we may be alſo."

2. You may ſee from what hath been ſaid, that ſuch as are yet unrelated to this Saviour are in a ſtate of ſin, and liable to divine wrath. Hear and receive this truth, however unwelcome to the ſecure, however diſtaſteful to the carnal mind. If it were not ſo, this propitiation which God hath ſet forth would have been altogether unneceſſary. Let us beg of him who hath aſcended up on high, to ſend down, according to his promiſe, his Spirit to convince the world of ſin. How many affecting and ſtriking proofs have we of this, both in our character and ſtate! and yet how difficult to make us ſenſible of it! What is to be ſeen in the world at preſent, or what do we read in the hiſtory of paſt ages, but one melancholy ſcene of diſorder, miſery, and bloodſhed, ſucceeding another? Is not this the effect of human guilt? And do we not, by mutual injuries, at once demonſtrate our own corruption, and execute the juſt judgment of God upon one another? May not every perſon diſcover the latent ſource of theſe flagrant crimes, in the pollution of his own heart, his averſion to what is good, and his proneneſs and inclination to what is evil? And yet, alas! how difficult a matter is it to make the heart humble itſelf, and plead guilty before God; to make us ſenſible, that we are tranſgreſſors from the womb, and inexcuſable in this tranſgreſſion; that the threatening of the law is moſt juſt, "Curſed is every one that continueth not "in all things written in the book of the law to do them;" and that it is of the infinite mercy of God, that the execution is ſuſpended, or any hope given us of being able to avert it?

Yet this, my brethren, I will repeat it, and I beſeech you to attend to it, is certainly the caſe by nature, with every perſon in this aſſembly. Every one who now hears me is in a ſtate of condemnation, and liable to everlaſting miſery, excepting that happy number who have "fled for "refuge to lay hold of the hope ſet before them." All inſenſible perſons, living in a careleſs ſecure forgetfulneſs of God; all who indulge themſelves habitually in the luſts of the fleſh; drunkards, ſwearers, profane and laſcivious jeſters, liars, unjuſt perſons, lovers of the preſent world, are aliens from the commonwealth of Iſrael, and ſtrangers to the covenant of promiſe. Oh that it were poſſible for me to awaken you to a ſenſe of your danger, while there is yet a poſſibility of eſcaping! Oh the importance to you of the unknown time from this day of your merciful viſitation to the day of your death! What would thoſe who are now reſerved in chains to the judgment of the great day, give for the precious opportunity you are now deſpiſing! In a little time I know that you yourſelves will repent; oh that it may not be when it is too late to reform! But all words muſt ſink under ſuch a ſubject. No picture that I could draw of the deſpairing horror of a ſinner on his death-bed, or the blaſpheming rage of thoſe who are tormented in hell-fire, could poſſibly give any of you a juſt apprehenſion of what it is to fall into the hands of the living God, unleſs it pleaſe himſelf to wound the conſcience with the arrows of conviction, that he may afterwards pour in the healing balm of peace and conſolation. And oh that it might ſtand with the will of God that none here preſent ſhould eſcape!

3. Learn from what has been ſaid, that there is no ſacrifice for ſin, but the one offering of our Redeemer on the croſs; no hope of mercy for any child of Adam, but through his blood. The typical ſacrifices under the Old Teſtament were but ſhadows, the ſubſtance is Chriſt. In vain will any go about to eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs, and refuſe to ſubmit to the righteouſneſs of God. Think not, my brethren, by attempts of reformation, by faulty defective duties, to be able to cancel any part of that guilt to which you are adding every day. How great is the fol-

ly and preſumption of ſelf-righteouſneſs! What a profane contempt of the riches of divine grace! Hath God ſeen it neceſſary to ſet forth Chriſt as a propitiation through faith in his blood? and will you ſay, that it is unneceſſary, and ſpurn the offered mercy? How much ignorance is in ſelf-righteouſneſs! What imperfect views muſt they have of the law of God, and how little knowledge of themſelves, and their own hearts, who admire or truſt in human virtue! Above all, what is the foundation and corner-ſtone of ſelf-righteouſneſs? It is pride, that ſin of all others moſt odious and abominable in the ſight of God. Is it not a matter of daily experience, that thoſe perſons who are evidently moſt looſe and careleſs in their own practice, and who, one would think, ſhould have leaſt of that kind to rely upon, are moſt prone to a ſelf-righteous plan, and moſt ready to deſpiſe the doctrine of juſtification through the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt. Are you ſometimes ſurpriſed at this, Chriſtians? The thing is eaſily explained. They know little either of the law of God or their own hearts. They ſeldom ſtudy the one, or reflect upon the other. If they did, they would ſoon be aſhamed of ſuch a pretence. Thoſe who apply themſelves with the greateſt diligence to the ſtudy of holineſs in heart and life, do always moſt ſenſibly feel, and moſt willingly confeſs, that all their righteouſneſſes are as filthy rags before God.

4. In Chriſt Jeſus, and the blood of the everlaſting covenant, there is abundant proviſion made for the pardon of all our ſins, and peace with an offended God. "Be-"hold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the ſin of the "world!" Behold the Lamb which God himſelf hath ordained, and ſet apart for this important work, and which he will certainly accept! "Deliver them," ſaith he, "from going down to the pit: I have found a ranſom." Behold the immaculate and ſpotleſs victim in the purity of his human, and the glory of his divine nature! There is no ſin ſo atrocious but his blood is ſufficient to waſh away the guilt. Is there any ſinner in this aſſembly burdened with a ſenſe of guilt, arreſted by an accuſing conſcience, terrified by the thunders of the law, ready to cry out, "Who can ſtand before this holy Lord God! My fleſh

" trembleth becauſe of thee: I am afraid of thy judg-
" ments." Let ſuch an one know, that help is laid on him that is " mighty to ſave." Let your guilt be what it will, who can ſo far derogate from the Redeemer's glory as to ſuſpect that his blood cannot purge it away? Give no heed to unbelieving thoughts, or diſcouraging ſuggeſtions; but be " ſtrong in faith, giving glory to God;" and attend to the Saviour's own words: " Him that cometh " unto me, I will in no wiſe caſt out."

5. In the *laſt* place, Let all the children of God, whoſe hope hath ſtill been in the divine mercy through a crucified Saviour, embrace the opportunity now given them of profeſſing, exerciſing, and ſtrengthening their faith in the great atonement. Plead your relation to God through Chriſt, and encourage yourſelves in his all-ſufficiency and merit. Look upon his ſufferings for humbling you under a ſenſe of the evil of ſin, which made ſuch an expiation neceſſary. Nothing ſerves more to abaſe and level human pride, than to ſee our nature on the croſs though perſonally united to the divine. Look upon him in his agony, for mortifying and crucifying ſin in you. There is a purifying virtue, and ſanctifying efficacy, in the blood of Chriſt. It not only ſpeaks peace to the wounded conſcience, but purges the conſcience from dead works to ſerve the living God. I am not againſt the introduction of every argument from ſcripture or reaſon againſt ſin, or in ſupport of duty; but let them never ſupplant the great, the leading, the conſtraining argument, which is drawn from the croſs of Chriſt. Believe it, my brethren, nothing ſo much reconciles the heart to duty, nothing ſo kindles a holy indignation againſt ſin, as a believing view of the Lamb of God, which taketh away the ſin of the world. This gives the Spirit of adoption a child like fear, and a child-like love. This fills the Chriſtian with comfort, this inſpires the Chriſtian with zeal. To ſeek our comfort in a ſeparate way, or in the firſt inſtance from our duties, is to make that comfort feeble and variable as the duties are defective; but to enliven our duties by the comforts of the goſpel is to follow the order of the covenant of grace, by which we at once promote the glory of God, and moſt ef-

fectually ſecure our own comfort and peace. This is the Spirit breathed by the apoſtle Paul, with whoſe words, Gal. ii. 19, 20. I ſhall conclude; "For I through the law "am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am "crucified with Chriſt; Nevertheleſs I live; yet not I, "but Chrſt liveth in me: and the life which I now live "in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who "loved me, and gave himſelf for me."

THE LOVE OF CHRIST IN REDEMPTION.

A

SERMON.

REV. i. 5.

Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.

ACTION SERMON.

THE bare repetition of these words is sufficient to convince every hearer how well they are suited to the design of our present meeting. Redeeming love is certainly the most delightful of all themes to every real Christian. It is the immediate and direct object of our contemplation in the Lord's supper. This ordinance was instituted to keep up the remembrance of the sufferings and death of Christ, which was the great and finishing proof of his love. How then can you attend on it in a more becoming and dutiful, a more pleasant and desireable, or a more happy and useful frame of spirit, than when your hearts are filled with a sense of the love of Christ, and you find yourselves disposed to join, with a mixture of joy and wonder, in the doxology of the apostle John, in the text, *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood?*

The author of this book is sometimes styled *the disciple whom Jesus loved.* Since, therefore, it pleased his master to distinguish him by the tenderness of particular friendship, it is no wonder that we find so much of the

delightful affection of love in his writings. In the beginning of this chapter, he gives an account of the general ſubject and deſign of the book of Revelation, the manner in which the diſcoveries contained in it were made to him, and his fidelity in teſtifying them to others. Then follows the apoſtolic ſalutation to the ſeven churches in Aſia, which is a ſolemn benediction, in name of all the perſons of the adorable Trinity: "Grace be to you, and "peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is "to come;" (that is, from God the Father, the ancient of days, immutable and eternal); "and from the ſeven ſpi-"rits which are before his throne;" (not to detain you with a critical account of this phraſe, it means the Holy Ghoſt, ſingle in his perſon, but multiplied in his gifts; the variety, fullneſs, and perfection of which, are denoted by this form of expreſſion); "and from Jeſus Chriſt, who is "the faithful witneſs, and the firſt-begotten from the dead, "and the prince of the kings of the earth." To him you ſee he gives three illuſtrious characters.

1. *The faithful witness*, who came from above, and revealed the whole will of God for our ſalvation; who being the eternal truth, might be abſolutely depended on in the account he was by the apoſtle to communicate, of the great events of Providence towards his church and people. 2. *The first begotten from the dead*, declared to be the Son of God with power, by his glorious reſurrection and triumph over the king of terrors. And, 3. *The Prince of the kings of the earth*; that is, the Lord of nature, to whom every prince and potentate muſt be ſubject, and to the ends of whoſe Providence, and the increaſe of whoſe kingdom, all their ſchemes of policy and conqueſt ſhall at laſt be ſubſervient. He then, with great propriety, having mentioned the name, and given a ſhort view of the character of his bleſſed Lord, lays hold of the opportunity to expreſs his own and every other ſinner's obligation to him in this ſublime aſcription, *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.*

To enter upon the conſideration of the love of Chriſt in its full extent, in its ſource, its expreſſions, and its effects, even thoſe that are ſuggeſted in the text, would

far exceed the bounds of a ſingle diſcourſe. What I propoſe, therefore, at this time, in order to prepare your minds, and my own, for the ſolemn action before us, is only to collect into one view ſome of the great and general characters of the love of Chriſt, which are moſt proper to excite our gratitude and praiſe; and then to make ſome practical improvement of it, for your inſtruction and direction.

I. Firſt, then, let us endeavor to point out ſome of the great and general characters of the love of Chriſt. In this I ſhall take care to confine myſelf to ſuch views as are given of it in the holy ſcriptures. And every character given of it there, we are both entitled and obliged to attend to, and improve.

1. Firſt of all, then, you may obſerve, that it is an *everlasting* love. It took its riſe in the eternal counſels of Heaven. This is a character given of the love of God to his people, Jer. xxxi. 3. "Yea, I have loved thee with "an everlaſting love: therefore with loving kindneſs "have I drawn thee." This expreſſion is often uſed with a double view, to ſhew, on the one hand, its early, its original ſource, and on the other, its perpetual ſtability, and endleſs duration. Pſ. ciii. 17. "But the mercy "of the Lord is from everlaſting to everlaſting upon them "that fear him; and his righteouſneſs unto childrens "children." Iſ. liv. 7, 8. "For a ſmall moment have "I forſaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather "thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee, for a "moment; but with everlaſting kindneſs will I have "mercy on thee, ſaith the Lord thy Redeemer." Having cited theſe paſſages of the Old Teſtament, I muſt juſtify the application of them, by obſerving, that all the covenant-mercies of God to man, in our preſent fallen ſtate, are to be referred to the love of Chriſt, as their price, their ſource, and their ſum. This is plain from innumerable paſſages of ſcripture: Eph. i. 4, 5, "Accor- "ding as he hath choſen us in him, before the founda- "tion of the world, that we ſhould be holy, and without "blame before him in love: having predeſtinated us unto

" the adoption of children by Jeſus Chriſt to himſelf, ac-
" cording to the good pleaſure of his will." Eph. iii. 11.
" According to the eternal purpoſe which he purpoſed in
" Chriſt Jeſus our Lord." For this reaſon it is, amongſt others, that Chriſt is called, Rev. xiii. 8, " the Lamb
" ſlain from the foundation of the world."

I confeſs, my brethren, we are but ill able to underſtand, or at leaſt to meaſure, the import of this truth, That the love of Chriſt to ſinners, or of God in him, was from eternity. All our conceptions are ſoon loſt, and ſwallowed up, in what is infinite and boundleſs. But ſurely it affords matter for the deepeſt and humbleſt adoration, as well as for the higheſt gratitude and joy. Does it not afford matter for adoring wonder, that the plan for redeeming loſt ſinners, and reſtoring them to the obedience and enjoyment of God, was the object of the divine purpoſe from eternity? It appears to be a very conſpicuous part, or rather perhaps we are warranted to ſay, from the ſcripture revelation, that it is the chief part of our Creator's will, to which every other part of his providence is ſubordinate and ſubſervient. Accordingly, in the very paſſage where my text lies, the Redeemer ſays, ver. 8. " I
" am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending,
" ſaith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is
" to come, the Almighty." Does not this lead us to contemplate the glory of an infinite God, as it ſhines in this everlaſting love? Does it not alſo afford matter of gratitude to the believing ſoul, while he conſiders every veſſel of mercy as concerned in this eternal purpoſe?

I am ſenſible, my brethren, there may be an abuſe and perverſion of the doctrine of election, if we think of it as independent of its fruits, and apply it ſo as to produce either ſecurity or deſpair. But I deſpiſe the wiſdom of thoſe perſons who would conceal this truth as dangerous, which it hath pleaſed God diſtinctly to reveal. It is the root which produceth the plant; but it is the plant which diſcovers the root. It is the fountain which produceth the ſtreams; but the ſtreams lead us to the fountain. Muſt not the ſinner who by faith has laid hold on a crucified Saviour, and given credit to the word of God in a preach-

ed goſpel, conſider, with admiration, his name written in *the book of life of the Lamb ſlain from the foundation of the world?* What delight will it give him! What honor does it reflect upon him, at the ſame time that it deſtroys the very foundation of arrogance and pride? This is the firſt, and yet it is but one of many parts of the doctrine of ſalvation, which at once exalts and abaſes us; raiſes our hopes, and forbids us to glory; clothes us with infinite honor, and yet diſcovers us to be leſs than nothing: ſo that we may ſay with the apoſtle Paul, after a view of the ſame ſubject, Rom. xi. 33. "O the depth of "the riches both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God! "how unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt "finding out!" This leads me to obſerve,

2. That the love of Chriſt is *free* and *unmerited* love. This is a circumſtance that is ſcarcely ever ſeparated from the account given of the love of Chriſt in ſcripture. It may be founded even on the infinite diſproportion between uncreated excellence and created weakneſs: Pſ. viii. 4. "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the "ſon of man, that thou viſiteſt him?" Pſ. cxliv. 3. "Lord, "what is man, that thou takeſt knowledge of him? or the "ſon of man, that thou makeſt account of him?" Nay, as if this were a truth of the utmoſt moment, we have it repeated a third time in almoſt the ſame words; Job vii. 17. "What is man, that thou ſhouldſt magnify him? and that "thou ſhouldſt ſet thine heart upon him?" But this is not all, nor indeed the main thing to be attended to; for the love of Chriſt hath for its object thoſe who were in actual rebellion againſt God, tranſgreſſors of his holy law, and liable to the ſtroke of his juſtice. It was not only to exalt thoſe who were low, or to ſupply thoſe who were needy, that Chriſt came, but to deliver thoſe who were appointed to death: John iii. 16. "God ſo loved the "the world, that he gave his only begotten Son that who-"ſoever believeth on him, ſhould not periſh, but have "everlaſting life." Rom. v. 8. "But God commendeth "his love towards us, in that while we were yet ſinners, "Chriſt died for us." Eph. ii. 4, 5. "But God who is "rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

" even when we were dead in ſins, hath quickened us to-
" gether with Chriſt, (by grace ye are ſaved.)" The ſame thing indeed is clearly intimated in the words of our text, *Unto him that loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood.* It is on this account in particular that ſalvation, according to the goſpel, is ſaid to be free, and of grace, that is to ſay, an act of unmerited and voluntary kindneſs, which the ſinner had no title to demand : Rom. iii. 23, 24, 25. " For all have ſinned, and come ſhort
" of the glory of God; being juſtified freely by his
" grace, through the redemption that is in Jeſus Chriſt :
" whom God hath ſet forth to be a propitiation through
" faith in his blood, to declare his righteouſneſs for the re-
" miſſion of ſins that are paſt, through the forbearance of
" God."

Believe it, Chriſtians, this is the proper exerciſe of mercy ; and here the divine mercy ſhines and reigns. Without this, it is not obſcured only, but annihilated or deſtroyed. But, oh ! what a view does this give us of the love of Chriſt ! What an impreſſion will his love make on all thoſe who are truly convinced of their guilt and wretchedneſs ! This is the very hinge upon which the whole doctrine of ſalvation turns. I hope you are not diſpoſed to make any oppoſition to it. But, alas ! it is not ſufficient to have learned it as a ſcience, to have been taught it as making a part of the Chriſtian faith ; it is another matter to have a real and perſonal conviction of it upon the heart. Why is the love of Chriſt ſo cold a ſubject to the generality of the world, but becauſe they have no ſenſe of their guilt and miſery ? I am even afraid, that many of the zealous advocates for this truth have but little experience of its power, and live but little under the influence of it in their practice. Where indeed is the perſon to be found, who does full juſtice to the Saviour, and conſiders his love as wholly unmerited and free ? The moſt evangelical expreſſions do often conſiſt with the moſt legal and ſelf-righteous affections. Let me try, however, before I leave this particular, if I can make you underſtand it, even though you ſhould not feel it. Suppoſe any of you

were upon the moſt deliberate and compoſed reflection, upon the moſt particular and cloſe examination, ſenſible that you juſtly deſerved to be baniſhed from the divine preſence, and caſt into everlaſting fire; and that your bleſſed Saviour, when there was no other way to prevent it, did ſave you by the ſacrifice of himſelf; tell me, what would you not owe to him? what words would you find to expreſs your love to him, or your ſenſe of his love to you? There have been ſome convinced ſinners ſo rivetted, if I may ſpeak ſo, to this circumſtance, that they could find little other way of meaſuring the love of Chriſt, but by looking into themſelves; and to whom indeed it has been enough to illuſtrate the greatneſs of his mercy that they were not conſumed. To this add,

3. The love of Chriſt is *unſolicited* love. It took its riſe, not from thoſe who ſtood in need of it, but from him who beſtowed it. It was not the effect of our earneſt importunity, but of his own infinite mercy. This is a circumſtance which we ought by no means to omit, as we find it particularly taken notice of in Scripture: 1 John iv. 10. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that "he loved us, and ſent his Son to be the propitiation for "our ſins;" and in the ſame chapter, verſe 19. "We "love him becauſe he firſt loved us." It is natural to expect, that thoſe who are in miſery ſhould implore the aſſiſtance of thoſe who are able to relieve them, or that thoſe who have been in the offence ſhould humble themſelves before thoſe who have it in their power to puniſh, or to forgive them. But it was quite otherwiſe here. The love of Chriſt diſcovered itſelf, when we were in open rebellion againſt him; or, in the words of the apoſtle Paul, Rom. v. 10. "While we were enemies, we were reconciled to "God by the death of his Son."

This affords us at once an illuſtration of the love of Chriſt, and a moving picture of our own deplorable and guilty ſtate. There is ſomething infinitely more noble and generous in extending mercy to the miſerable, without waiting for their requeſt, than when it is hardly procured, or as it were extorted, by importunity and ſolicitation. And does it not preſent us with a melancholy

proſpect of our natural ſtate, that we are not only unworthy to receive, but unwilling to aſk for mercy? I deſire, my brethren, that you may not conſider this as only relating to mankind in general, and the voluntary purpoſe of grace and mercy from above in their favor, but as what makes a part of the experience of every particular convert. As the offer of mercy is made to him freely, ſo he will and muſt be ſenſible how cold and unthankful a reception he hath often given to the propoſal. He will be ſenſible what reſiſtance he hath often made to the deſign of the goſpel; what exception he hath taken at the terms of it; and with how much difficulty he was at laſt induced to comply with it. I am perſuaded there are few circumſtances in the love of Chriſt that are more affecting to a believer, than to remember his own obſtinacy, when a ſinner, and his backwardneſs to accept of the invitations of the Saviour. After he hath reſted his hope on the divine mercy, after he hath been made willing in a day of divine power, and hath obtained ſome comfortable evidence of the divine favor, how does he tremble at the thoughts of his former reſiſtance! how does he wonder at the patience of God, and adore that victorious love, which ſtormed his heart, as well as paid the price of his redemption!

We find this particularly the caſe with thoſe who having been for a ſeaſon remarkably profligate, are ſaved as brands from the burning. They cannot help recollecting their former condition, their profane madneſs; and wondering, with a mixture of gratitude and fear, that they were not cut off in their wickedneſs, and made monuments of divine vengeance. Far from deſiring a ſhare in the love of Chriſt, they were perhaps doing their utmoſt in contempt of his name, and in oppoſition to his intereſt. Yet, Rom. x. 20. "was he found of them that ſought him "not, and made manifeſt to them that aſked not after him:" they were powerfully though ſweetly conſtrained to return to God through him.

4. The love of Chriſt is a *diſtinguiſhing* love, which muſt neceſſarily and greatly inhance the obligation of thoſe who are the objects of it. When one perſon is paſſed by, and another is choſen, either to be delivered from

impending danger, or to be made partaker of extraordinary bleſſings, the loſs or ſuffering of the one, ſeems to ſet off the ſuperior happineſs of, or the favor beſtowed upon the other. To apply this to the ſubject we are now upon, there is a double diſtinction pointed out in ſcripture; one of our nature, in oppoſition to the fallen angels; and the other, of particular perſons, as the veſſels of mercy.

(1.) There is an evident diſtinction between our nature and that of the fallen angels: Heb. ii. 16. "For ve-"rily he took not on him the nature of angels; he took "on him the ſeed of Abraham." 2 Pet. ii. 4. "God "ſpared not the angels that ſinned, but caſt them down to "hell, and delivered them into chains of darkneſs, to be "reſerved unto judgment." I am ſenſible, that upon this ſubject we may be ſometimes in danger of ſpeaking with impropriety, eſpecially if we pretend to aſſign the reaſons of God's procedure any further than he hath been pleaſed himſelf explicitly to reveal them. There can be no doubt that the Lord of all, God infinitely wiſe, had the beſt reaſons for his conduct, the moſt noble and excellent purpoſes in view in every thing that he ordained; but they are not diſcovered to us, and perhaps they are above our comprehenſion. The ſingle point we are called to attend to, is the diſtinction infinitely gracious which is made in our favor. A Saviour is provided for us, a mercy infinite in itſelf, and the more highly to be prized, that (Jude, verſe 6) the angels, our fellow-creatures, "who kept "not their firſt eſtate, but left their own habitation, he "hath reſerved in everlaſting chains under darkneſs, unto "the judgment of the great day." If we ſhould attempt a compariſon between ourſelves and theſe ſpirits of higher order, we could find no ground of preference in our own favor; perhaps we ſhould find many things that might ſeem to operate a contrary way; but it is ſafeſt, in humility and gratitude to ſay with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. cxv. 3, "Our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatſoever he "pleaſed."

(2.) But this is not all; there is alſo a diſtinction of particular perſons as the veſſels of mercy. Since I am introducing this ſubject, to prevent miſtakes, I muſt obſerve,

that every ſinner of the race of Adam who ſhall periſh eternally, ſhall alſo periſh moſt juſtly; his blood ſhall lie at his own door, and he ſhall be found guilty of rejecting the counſel of God againſt himſelf. At the ſame time, all who are effectually brought to the ſaving knowledge of God through Chriſt, ſhall be obliged to confeſs, that they were brought in by almighty power, or, in the language of the Holy Ghoſt, 1 Pet. i. 2. that they are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through "ſanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and ſprinkling "of the blood of Jeſus Chriſt."

On this, as on the former branch of this head, it may be obſerved, that we muſt not preſume to penetrate into the unſearchable depth of the divine counſels; but at the ſame time it muſt be remembered, that we are not permitted, and cannot pretend, to find the reaſons of preference in ourſelves; for no fleſh may glory in his preſence. God in many paſſages aſſerts his own ſovereignty and perfect liberty in the diſtribution of his grace: Rom. ix. 15, 16. "For he ſaith to Moſes, I will have mercy on whom I "will have mercy, and I will have compaſſion on whom I "will have compaſſion. So then it is not of him that "willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that ſhew-"eth mercy." And again, in the 18th verſe, "There-"fore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and "whom he will he hardeneth." Nothing can be harder, indeed, than for the proud and carnal mind to bow before the ſovereignty of God; yet nothing is more evident, than that the deſtination of the veſſels of mercy doth not proceed upon the ordinary grounds of human eſtimation. Nay, there ſeems to be an expreſs deſign to ſtain the pride of all human glory: 1 Cor. i. 26, 27. "For you ſee your calling, brethren, how that not many wiſe men after the fleſh, not "many mighty, not many noble are called. But God "hath choſen the fooliſh things of the world, to confound "the wiſe; and God hath choſen the weak things of the "world, to confound the things which are mighty." Experience daily illuſtrates this; for while we ſee ſome brought to an entire ſubmiſſion to the goſpel, and an obedient conformity to the will of God, we ſee many of equal,

or of greater rank, of equal or of greater ability and endowments of mind, and favored with equal or ſuperior advantages and opportunities of inſtruction, who yet continue to bear the marks of reprobation. The ſame mercies diſpoſe one to thankfulneſs, and inſpire another with pride. The ſame trials will ſoften one heart, and harden another. All this our Redeemer makes the ſubject of a ſolemn thankſgiving to God, Luke x. 21. "In that hour Jeſus "rejoiced in ſpirit, and ſaid, I thank thee, O Father, Lord "of heaven and earth, that thou haſt hid theſe things from "the wiſe and prudent, and haſt revealed them unto babes: "even ſo, Father, for ſo it ſeemed good in thy ſight." Who that believes, in this aſſembly, will preſume to take the leaſt part of the honor of it to himſelf, or will refuſe to adore the diſtinguiſhing love of God? And how often muſt thoſe who bare the meſſage of peace be obliged to ſeek the cauſe of an unſucceſsful goſpel in the counſels of the Moſt High? 2 Cor. iv. 3. "But if our goſpel be hid, it is hid "to them that are loſt; in whom the god of this world "hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, leſt "the light of the glorious goſpel of Chriſt, who is the im-"age of God, ſhould ſhine unto them."

5. The love of Chriſt was an *expensive* love. So great a deliverance would have called for the moſt humble and thankful acknowledgment, though it had been as much *without price* to the Saviour as to the ſinner. But oh! my brethren, how far was it otherwiſe! and what ſhall we think or ſay of the love of Chriſt, when we conſider how much it coſt him to procure ſalvation for us! when we conſider the depth of his humiliation, the variety, the continuance, and the greatneſs of his ſufferings! You cannot but be ſenſible how frequent mention is made of this in ſcripture, or rather how ſeldom it is omitted when the love of Chriſt is introduced at all. It is the circumſtance particularly pointed at in the text, *Unto him that loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood.* The ſame thing appears from the other doxologies, or acts of worſhip to the Saviour, which are contained in this book, as Rev. v. 9. "And they ſung a new ſong, ſaying, Thou "art worthy to take the book, and to open the ſeals there-

" of; for thou waſt ſlain, and haſt redeemed us to God " by thy blood." It appears alſo, from the frequent mention of the croſs of Chriſt, on which his ſufferings were completed. Nay, of ſo much moment was this, that it ſeems to have made the ſum of the goſpel, as preached by the apoſtles; 1 Cor. ii. 2. " For I determined not to " know any thing among you, ſave Jeſus Chriſt, and him " crucified."

The ſufferings of Chriſt, then, ought to be ever preſent to the mind of the believer. The neceſſity and importance of this is plain from both the ſeals of the covenant of grace. The water in baptiſm repreſents the blood of Chriſt; and we are told, Rom. vi. 3. " Know ye not, " that ſo many of us as were baptized into Jeſus Chriſt, " were baptized into his death." The inſtitution of the Lord's ſupper alſo had the remembrance of Chriſt's ſufferings as its direct and immediate intention; 1 Cor. xi. 24, 25, 26. " And when he had given thanks, he brake " it, and ſaid, Take, eat; this is my body, which is bro- " ken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the " ſame manner alſo he took the cup, when he had ſupped, " ſaying, This cup is the new teſtament in my blood: " this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. " For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, " ye do ſhew the Lord's death till he come." Remember, then, Chriſtians, how he left the throne of his glory, and took upon him the form of a ſervant. Remember him deſpiſed and rejected of men, a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief. His life indeed was one continued ſcene of ſorrow, from the cradle to the grave.

I hope the particulars of his ſufferings are not ſtrangers to your meditations: may the Lord enable you to contemplate them with faith and love. Remember his agony in the garden, when he ſuffered from his Father's hand: For " it pleaſed the Lord to bruiſe him, and to put him to " grief." Think, O Chriſtian, what it was to redeem a loſt world, when you hear him ſaying, as in John xii. 27. " Now is my ſoul troubled; and what ſhall I ſay? Fa- " ther, ſave me from this hour; but for this cauſe came " I unto this hour." Remember him ſeized by the treach-

ery of one of his own diſciples; accuſed and arraigned as a felon; dragged to the tribunal of an unrighteous judge; clothed with a purple robe, and crowned with thorns in deriſion of his kingly office; ſeverely ſcourged; blindfolded, buffeted, and ſpit upon; and the whole indeed ſo conducted by the righteous permiſſion and unſeen direction of divine providence, that hardly any expreſſion, either of cruelty or contumely, was omited. Ceaſe to wonder, my dear friends, that profane wretches deride the ſigns of his ſufferings, when you remember, that the blinded ramble attending the important trial were permitted to inſult him, ſaying, "Propheſy unto us, thou "Chriſt, who is he that ſmote thee."

Remember him going forth without the camp, bearing his reproach. Remember that ſpotleſs victim, the Lamb of God, ſtretched upon a croſs, and nailed to the accurſed tree, while he ſuffered all that the extremity of bodily pain, and the moſt unutterable anguiſh of ſpirit, could poſſibly inflict upon an innocent creature. No wonder that the earth did ſhake, that the rocks were rent, and the natural ſun refuſed to give his light, when the Sun of Righteouſneſs was under ſo great an eclipſe. Did the Saviour then willingly ſubmit to all this pain and ignominy for our ſakes? Was not this the moſt expenſive love; and can we refuſe to ſay with the multitude of the heavenly hoſt, Rev. v. 12. "Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain, to re- "ceive power, and riches, and wiſdom, and ſtrength, and "honor, and glory, and bleſſing?"

6. The love of Chriſt was the moſt generous and *diſintereſted* love. The ſuppoſition or ſuſpicion of any intereſted views in what one perſon does for another, nay, even the poſſibility of his ſerving any purpoſe of his own at the ſame time, greatly abates the value of any favor, and leſſens the ſenſe of obligation. But nothing of this kind can be ſo much as imagined here. It was giving to thoſe from whom he could receive nothing, and emptying himſelf of that glory to which the whole creation could not make any addition. The truth is, we ought to conſider in the ſame light every other mercy of God, as well as the love of Chriſt his Son, which was the ſource of

them all; Job xxii. 2, 3, 4. "Can a man be profitable "unto God, as he that is wiſe may be profitable unto him-"ſelf? Is it any pleaſure to the Almighty, that thou art "righteous? or is it gain to him, that thou makeſt thy "ways perfect? Will he reprove thee for fear of thee? "will he enter with thee into judgment?" And to the ſame purpoſe, Job xxxv. 5. 6, 7, 8. "Look unto the "heavens, and ſee, and behold the clouds, which are "higher than thou. If thou ſinneſt, what doſt thou againſt "him? or if thy tranſgreſſions be multiplied, what doſt "thou unto him? If thou be righteous, what giveſt thou "him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? Thy wicked-"neſs may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteouſneſs "may profit the ſon of man." The eſſential glory and happineſs of the Diety, and conſequently of the *Eternal Word*, can receive no addition, nor ſuffer the ſmalleſt diminution, from the ſtate of any, or of all his creatures. He was infinitely happy in himſelf from all eternity, before there was man or angel to ſerve him, and would have continued ſo though they had never been. How infinitely then are we indebted to this generous Saviour! with what gratitude ought we to celebrate his pure and diſintereſted love, who graciouſly interpoſed in our behalf, and delivered us from the wrath of God, by bearing it in our room!

7. In the laſt place, the love of Chriſt was a moſt *fruitful*, *active*, and *beneficent* love. The effects of it are unſpeakably great; the bleſſings which we reap from it are not only infinite in number, but ineſtimable in value. They are indeed almoſt as valuable as their price was coſtly. It was not to be ſuppoſed, that ſo great a perſon would be employed upon a trivial work, or an infinite price paid for an inconſiderable purchaſe. But how, my brethren, ſhall we form any adequate conception of the benefits that flow from our Redeemer's death? All that is neceſſary for us, all that is deſirable to us, all that is truly precious in itſelf, is effectually made ours: Rom. viii. 32. "He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him "up for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give "us all things?" 1. Cor. i. 30. "But of him are ye in

" Chriſt Jeſus, who of God is made unto us wiſdom, and " righteouſneſs, and ſanctification, and redemption."

(1.) We are through Chriſt delivered from condemnation: Rom. viii. 1. " There is therefore now no con- " demnation to them which are in Chriſt Jeſus, who walk " not after the fleſh, but after the Spirit." Do you know any thing of a ſenſe of guilt? Does your Creator's power and greatneſs ever make you afraid? Have you trembled at the approach of the king of terrors? or of that day of righteous judgment, when God ſhall render to every man according to his works? Chriſt our Saviour hath delivered us " from the wrath to come." This is the firſt ground of the apoſtle's aſcription in the text: *Unto him that loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood.* Hear alſo the apoſtle's triumphant aſſurance, Rom. viii. 33, 34. " Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of " God's elect? It is God that juſtifieth: who is he that " condemneth? It is Chriſt that died, yea rather, that is " riſen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who " alſo maketh interceſſion for us."

(2.) Through Chriſt the believer is aſſured, that he ſhall receive every thing that is neceſſary for him in his paſſage through the world. The Spirit is purchaſed and beſtowed to lead him into all truth, and to ſanctify him wholly. Chriſt did not ſatisfy himſelf with cancelling our guilt, but made effectual proviſion for the renovation of our nature. The Spirit is alſo given as a ſpirit of conſolation. He is ſtyled *the Comforter*, who ſhall *abide with us forever*. Without enlarging at this time on the comforts of the goſpel, they are ſufficiently commended in the following words of the apoſtle, Phil. iv. 7. " And the peace of " God which paſſeth all underſtanding, ſhall keep your " hearts and minds through Chriſt Jeſus." To theſe add a ſanctified providence. As many as are reconciled to God through Chriſt, may reſt ſatisfied that all things ſhall work together for their good. The moſt oppoſite events, proſperity and adverſity, health and ſickneſs, honor and reproach, nay, every thing without exception, ſhall be ſubſervient to their intereſt: 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, 23. " For all " things are yours: whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas,

" or the world, or life, or death, or things preſent, or things " to come, all are yours; and ye are Chriſt's; and Chriſt " is God's."

(3.) Through Chriſt the believer is entitled to everlaſting glory and happineſs in the enjoyment of God to all eternity. This was among the laſt things he told his diſciples before he left the world: John xiv. 2, 3. " In my " Father's houſe are many manſions; if it were not ſo, I " would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you. " And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come " again, and receive you unto myſelf, that where I am, " there ye may be alſo." You are this day to commemorate your Redeemer, who died once upon a croſs, but who has now been many ages upon a throne: Rev. i. 18. " I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am " alive for ever more, Amen; and have the keys of hell " and death." He is able to make his faithful diſciples more than conquerors over all their ſpiritual enemies; or, as it is expreſſed in the paſſage where the text lies, he will make them *kings and priests to God and his Father*. In the paſſage immediately preceding the text, he is called the firſt begotten from the dead; and elſewhere we are told, that the order of the reſurrection is, " Chriſt the firſt " fruits, and afterwards they that are Chriſt's at his com- " ing." It ſhall both finiſh and illuſtrate his love when he ſhall raiſe them that ſleep in the duſt; when he " ſhall " change their vile bodies, that they may be faſhioned like " unto his own glorious body, according to the working " whereby he is able to ſubdue all things unto himſelf." At preſent, how imperfect are our diſcoveries? how weak and feeble our conceptions? how cold and languid our affections! Now we " ſee through a glaſs darkly, but " then face to face." O how joyful to every believer the deliverance from a ſtate of ſuffering, temptation and ſin, and the poſſeſſion of perfect holineſs and unchangeable happineſs! And O how great the oppoſition of the future to the preſent ſtate! No more ſtruggling with the evils of life: No more perplexity or anxious care for food and raiment; no more diſtreſs from ſickneſs or pain; no priſons nor oppreſſors there; no liars nor ſlanderers there;

no complaints of an evil heart there, but the moſt perfect ſecurity of ſtate, and moſt unremitted vigor of affection. How ſhall the ranſomed of the Lord then ſing their Redeemer's praiſe! Rev. i. 5, 6. "Unto him that loved us, "and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood, and hath "made us kings and prieſts unto God and his father; to "him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

II. I proceed now to make ſome practical improvement of what hath been ſaid. And,

1. Let me intreat every perſon in this houſe to make the following obvious reflection: If ſo great are the obligations of believers to the love of Chriſt, how dreadful muſt be the condition of thoſe who die in their ſins! The one of theſe explains and illuſtrates the other. The believer can owe but little, if the deliverance is not great. I have been lately ſpeaking of the happineſs of the elect of God, in being freed from the miſeries of the preſent ſtate; but, oh! unhappy they who ſhall depart from this life unreconciled to God: "He that believeth on the Son hath "everlaſting life; but he that believeth not on the Son, "ſhall not ſee life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." When the heirs of glory "ſit down with Abraham, Iſaac, "and Jacob, in the kingdom of their Father," the unbelieving and impenitent ſhall be caſt into he lake of fire, "where the ſmoke of their torment aſcendeth up for ever "and ever." I deſire to put you in mind of this, under the impreſſion of this important truth, That nothing but the ſovereign grace of God can make the warning effectual; and therefore beſeeching him to accompany it with the powerful operation of his Holy Spirit. At the ſame time, I aſſure you, that if you reject the counſel of God againſt yourſelves, your blood ſhall be upon your own heads. Do not pretend to ſay, "If it depends upon elec-"tion, and almighty grace is neceſſary, all our endeavors "will be vain." Secret things belong only to God. His purpoſe is not more unchangeable than his promiſe is faithful. Nay, though you may not be able to ſee it, nor I to explain it, they are perfectly conſiſtent the one with the other. He will be *just when he speaketh, and clear*

when he judgeth; and therefore give heed to the exhortation, not in my words, but in the words of the Holy Ghoſt, Phil. ii. 12, 13. "Work out your own ſalvation "with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh "in you, both to will and to do of his good pleaſure."

Know, I beſeech you, your own mercy. The neceſſity is urgent, and the time is uncertain. With what propriety may the words of the apoſtle be addreſſed to every perſon in every ſituation, and in every age! 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2. "We then as workers together with him, beſeech you "alſo, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain: "for he ſaith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and "in the day of ſalvation have I ſuccored thee: behold, "now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of "ſalvation." Happy they who ſtill hear the joyful ſound! Happy the ſinner who is not yet gone to his own place! Flee, flee to your ſtrong hold, ye priſoners of hope. Conſider the aggravated guilt and ſeven-fold condemnation of the deſpiſers of the goſpel. All that you have heard of the love of Chriſt ſerves to ſhew the danger of his enemies. Read the words immediately following the aſcription of which the text is a part (ver. 7.): "Be- "hold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye ſhall ſee "him, and they alſo which pierced him; and all kin- "dreds of the earth ſhall wail becauſe of him." Read alſo this awful deſcription, Rev. vi. 14, 15, 16, 17. "And the "heavens departed as a ſcroll when it is rolled together; "and every mountain and iſland were moved out of their "places: and the kings of the earth, and the great men, "and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the migh- "ty men, and every bond-man, and every free-man, hid "themſelves in the dens, and in the rocks of the moun- "tains; and ſaid to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, "and hide us from the face of him that ſitteth on the "throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great "day of his wrath is come; and who ſhall be able to "ſtand?" Mark this extraordinary expreſſion, *the wrath of the Lamb*, that meekeſt and gentleſt of all creatures; teaching us, that his former meekneſs, and patience, and ſuffering, ſhall inflame and exaſperate his future ven-

geance. Could I conduct you to the gates of the infernal prison, I am persuaded you would hear Judas Iscariot, and all other treacherous disciples, crying out, 'O that Christ 'had never come in the flesh! The thunders of Sinai 'would have been less terrible. The frowns of Jesus of 'Nazareth are insupportable. O the dreadful, painful, 'and uncommon wrath of a Saviour on the judgment-'seat!'—The Lord speak consolation to his own people, and pierce the hearts of his enemies, that they may be brought to repentance.

2. You may learn from what has been said, that the great and leading motive to obedience under the gospel is a deep and grateful sense of redeeming love. This runs through the whole writings of the New Testament. It binds the believer to his duty; it animates him to diligence; it fills him with comfort: 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. "For "the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, "that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he "died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth "live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, "and rose again." Gal. ii. 19, 20. "For I through the "law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I "am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not "I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now "live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, "who loved me, and gave himself for me." That this motive will have the most powerful influence on the believer's conduct, is evident both from reason and experience. No principle takes a faster hold of the human heart than gratitude for favors received. If the mercies be cordially accepted, and highly esteemed, which is certainly the case here, nothing can withstand its influence. It reconciles the heart to the most difficult duties; nay, it even disposes the believer to court the opportunity of making some signal sacrifice, in testimony of his attachment. Love sincere and fervent overcomes all difficulties; or rather indeed it changes their nature, and makes labor and suffering a source of delight and satisfaction. Let but the Saviour's interest or honor seem to be concerned, and the believer, who feels how much he is indebted to him,

will cheerfully embrace the call, and ſet no bounds to his compliance. This ſhows how much beauty and force there is in our Lord's manner of recommending love and compaſſion to our fellow-creatures, Matth. xxv. 40. "And "the king ſhall anſwer and ſay unto them, Verily I ſay "unto you, In as much as ye have done it unto one of "the leaſt of theſe my brethren, ye have done it unto me." But to what purpoſe do I dwell upon this ſubject? for a ſenſe of redeeming love is not only the moſt powerful motive to every other duty, but is itſelf the poſſeſſion and exerciſe of the firſt duty of the moral law, as well as the ſum and ſubſtance of evangelical holineſs, viz. the love of God. The firſt ſin, by which our nature fell, was a diſtruſt of, and departure from God; and the malignity of every ſin we continue to commit, conſiſts in giving that room in the heart to ſomething elſe, which is due only to God. A ſenſe of redeeming love, therefore, expels the enemy, and makes up the breach, as thereby *the love of God is ſhed abroad in our hearts.*

3. You may ſee, from what has been ſaid, the neceſſity of a particular application of the truths of the goſpel to ourſelves, and the reliance of every believer upon them as the foundation of his own hope. I have ſometimes had occaſion to obſerve to you, that it is very doubtful, whether any perſon can ſo much as approve in his judgment the truths of the goſpel, till he perceive his own intereſt in them, and their neceſſity to his peace. Certain it is, the world that lieth in wickedneſs generally deſpiſes them. However, I ſhall admit as a thing poſſible, that a bad man may, either by imitation, or the power of outward evidence, embrace the goſpel as a ſyſtem of truth. But ſurely the love of Chriſt can neither be a ſource of comfort, nor a principle of obedience, unleſs he conſider it as terminating upon himſelf. Without this, the whole is general, cold, and unintereſting. But when he conſiders, not only the certainty of the truth, but the extent of the invitation, and can ſay, with Thomas, *My Lord, and my God*, then indeed the ties are laid upon him; then indeed he begins to feel their conſtraining power; then he not only contemplates the glory of God in the grace of re-

demption, but cheerfully and unfeignedly conſecrates himſelf to the ſervice of his Redeemer. Thisleads me, in the

Fourth and laſt place, to invite every ſinner in this aſſembly to accept of Chriſt as his Saviour, and to rely upon him as he is offered in the goſpel. To the ſecure and inſenſible, I know it is in vain to ſpeak. But if you ſee your own danger, what ſhould hinder your belief and reliance on the Saviour? If you either need or deſire deliverance, what with-holds your acceptance of it, when it is not only freely offered to you, but earneſtly urged upon you? Can you doubt the teſtimony of *the Amen, the faithful and true witness*? The bleſſings of his purchaſe belong not to one people or family, but to *every nation under heaven.* The commiſſion of thoſe who bear his meſſage is unlimited: Mark xvi. 15. "Go ye into all the "world, and preach the goſpel to every creature." They are offered, not only to the virtuous, the decent, and regular, but to the *chief* of ſinners: 1 Tim. i. 15. "This "is a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all acceptation, That "Chriſt Jeſus came into the world to ſave ſinners; of "whom I am chief." Whoever heareth theſe glad tidings, he diſhonoreth God, he poureth contempt on his Saviour's love, and he wrongeth his own ſoul, if he does not receive conſolation from them. Be not hindered by what you ſee in yourſelves, unleſs you are in love with ſin, and afraid of being divorced from it. The goſpel is preached to ſinners. It does not expect to find them, but it is intended to make them holy. A deep and inward ſenſe of your own unworthineſs, unleſs it is prevented by the deceiver, ſhould only make you more highly eſteem the grace of the goſpel, and more willingly depend on your Redeemer's love.

I conclude with the invitation which he himſelf gives to the weary ſinner, Matt. xi. 28, 29, 30. "Come unto "me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will "give you reſt. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of "me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye ſhall "find reſt unto your ſouls. For my yoke is eaſy, and "my burden is light."

REDEMPTION THE SUBJECT OF ADMIRATION TO THE ANGELS.

A

SERMON.

1 PETER i. 12. laſt clauſe.

Which things the Angels deſire to look into.

ACTION SERMON.

MY brethren, A ſerious and attentive mind, on peruſing the ſacred volume, can hardly help being often ſtruck both with the ſentiments and language of the inſpired writers on the ſubject of redemption. With what a deep veneration of ſoul, with what warmth of affection, with what tranſports of adoring thankfulneſs do they ſpeak of the plan laid by divine wiſdom, for the ſalvation of loſt ſinners, by the croſs of Chriſt! A perſon poſſeſſed only of underſtanding and taſte, may admire theſe ſallies of holy fervor, for the elevation of thought, and boldneſs of expreſſion, which a man's being in good earneſt on an intereſting ſubject doth naturally inſpire. But happy, happy, and only happy, that ſoul who from an inward approbation can receive, reliſh, and apply thoſe glorious things that are ſpoken of the name, character, and undertaking of the Saviour of ſinners.

You may obſerve, that there are two different ſubjects, in general, on which the writers of the New Teſtament are apt to break out, and enlarge, when they are conſidering or commending the myſtery of redemption. One

is, the glory of God, as it appears in it; the luſtre of divine power, wiſdom, and grace, which reigns through the whole. The ſecond is, the unſpeakable intereſt which we have in it, from the danger eſcaped on the one hand, and the exalted hopes to which we are raiſed by it, on the other. I cannot help putting you in mind, that theſe two things are ſo inſeparably joined, that none can forget or be inſenſible of any one of them, without in reality deſpiſing both. And as a view of the divine glory ſeems moſt immediately calculated to aſſiſt and continue a proper worſhipping frame, I intend, that this ſhall lead the way in our meditations on this occaſion. The ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper is called the *Euchariſt*, or ſacrifice of praiſe; and therefore very fit for adoring contemplation.

The words which I have read are the concluſion of the apoſtle Peter's account of the gradual unfolding of this great deſign of Providence; and they contain a ſtriking and extraordinary ſentiment, That the angels themſelves are filled with a holy curioſity to ſearch into the myſtery of redemption. Few commentators have failed to obſerve, that the word here tranſlated *to look into*, properly ſignifies, *to ſtoop* or *bend down, and examine with the ſtrictest attention.* This, my brethren, gives us a very exalted view of the ſcheme of redemption, as a leading deſign in the government of God, that theſe pure and exalted ſpirits, not only adore it as a part of their Creator's will, but that they are loſt and ſwallowed up in the contemplation of it, and ſee ſuch a ſeries of wonders, as they are not able to comprehend. If this is ſo, let us no longer poſtpone the following reflection: How much more are we, the intereſted parties, called to adore and dwell on this myſtery of love, on which our ſalvation from deſerved wrath, and poſſeſſion of infinite felicity to all eternity is ſuſpended! I cannot find a more proper ſubject for an introduction to the ſacred and ſolemn ſervice of this day; and therefore I beg your attention, while I endeavor, in dependence on divine grace, to illuſtrate the aſſertion in the text, by mentioning ſome particulars in the myſtery of redemption, which are probably the ſubject of adoring

enquiry, and perhaps holy aſtoniſhment, to thoſe celeſtial ſpirits. Having done this, I will conclude with ſome improvementof the ſubject, for aſſiſting you in your preſent duty.

I. First, then, we are to mention thoſe circumſtances in the myſtery of redemption which are probably the ſubject of adoring enquiry, or perhaps holy aſtoniſhment, to the angels of God. The angels, though they are exalted creatures, are yet plainly of limited capacity. There are many things of which they are ignorant: Matth. xxiv. 36. "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not "the angels of heaven, but my Father only." And as their employment is to be meſſengers and miniſters of God, with ſome inferior agency, in the conduct of his providence; ſo it is not to be doubted that much of their happineſs conſiſts in the contemplation of the nature and glory of God, as diſcovered in his works. They are repreſented in the book of Job as joyful witneſſes of the creation and birth of this lower world: Job xxxviii. 6, 7. "Whereupon are the foundations thereof faſtened? or "who laid the corner-ſtone thereof? when the morning-"ſtars ſang together, and all the ſons of God ſhouted for "joy." The ſtate of the church is alſo repreſented as diſcovering to them the divine wiſdom: Eph. iii. 10. "To "the intent that now unto the principalities and powers "in heavenly places might be known by the church the "manifold wiſdom of God."

Let us therefore conſider what circumſtances in the myſtery of redemption may be ſuppoſed to ſtrike them moſt with aſtoniſhment and wonder. This we cannot do without finding ourſelves greatly intereſted, and called to the deepeſt humility, and at the ſame time the higheſt exerciſe of gratitude and love. And,

1. The firſt thing I ſhall mention is the incarnation of the Son of God; the union of the divine and human nature, by the Word's being made fleſh. This is indeed the firſt thing to be conſidered, both in order and in rank. O wonderful union indeed! Well might the apoſtle ſay, 1 Tim. iii. 16. "Without controverſy, great is the myſtery "of godlineſs: God was manifeſt in the fleſh, juſtified in

" the Spirit, ſeen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, " believed on in the world, received up into glory." But what view muſt the angels have of this event? thoſe glorious and active beings, who are thus deſcribed, Pſal. civ. 4. " Who maketh his angels ſpirits, his miniſters a flaming " fire." Their knowledge of the nature of God, as a pure and immaculate ſpirit, as the eternal, uncreated, ſelf-exiſtent Father of Spirits, and of the Son, as one with the Father, who " thought it no robbery to be equal with God," muſt deeply aſtoniſh them at this marvellous humiliation; that he ſhould become one perſon with a creature, and that with a creature lower than themſelves; for it is expreſsly ſaid, that " he was made a little lower than the angels." How aſtoniſhing, that he who is the Lord of angels, and whoſe diſtance from the higheſt of all created ſpirits is not great only, but infinite, ſhould become a man, by taking to himſelf a true body, and a reaſonable ſoul!

It is more than probable from our text, eſpecially when compared with the context, and other paſſages of ſcripture, that this diſcovery was made to the angels only gradually, as it was to men. They could not but have intimations of God's purpoſe of mercy, which was begun and carried on immediately after the fall; this however was done in a manner comparatively dark and obſcure. There have been indeed ſome who ſeem to me to have gone a little beyond their depth; and who have ſuppoſed, that God diſcovered to the angels, even before the creation of man, the fall, which he foreſaw, and the method by which he propoſed to recover a choſen remnant, viz. the incarnation of his own Son; that the ſuperior honor done to an inferior creature, ſtirred up the pride and envy of Lucifer, and his aſſociates; and that in this conſiſted their guilt and apoſtaſy, for which they were puniſhed with an immediate baniſhment from the abodes of bliſs, and are now reſerved in chains under darkneſs to the day of judgment.

This at beſt is but mere conjecture. It ſeems much more probable that they learned the ſeveral parts of this great deſign of mercy in their gradual accompliſhment. It cannot indeed be doubted, that the angels who were concerned in the miniſtry of providence, muſt have known

early of the intended redemption, and the Redeemer. Yet when they are ſaid, as in the text, to look into the things preached in the goſpel, it gives reaſon to conclude, that the incarnation and ſufferings of Chriſt was, with regard to them, as well as us, a myſtery hid from ages and generations. Now how could thoſe holy angels who retained their integrity, but be filled with amazement at the depth of divine councils, when they ſaw themſelves obliged to worſhip a man, to worſhip a feeble infant, born in a ſtable, and lying in a manger? when they found themſelves charged with publiſhing the glad tidings? as in Luke ii. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14. "And the angel ſaid unto them, Fear "not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, "which ſhall be to all people. For unto you is born this "day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Chriſt the "Lord. And this ſhall be a ſign unto you; Ye ſhall find "the babe wrapped in ſwaddling-clothes, lying in a man-"ger. And ſuddenly there was with the angel a multi-"tude of the heavenly hoſt, praiſing God, and ſaying, "Glory to God in the higheſt, and on earth peace, good-"will towards men."

There is one circumſtance in the incarnation itſelf, which ought not to be omitted, becauſe it is mentioned in ſcripture, and is certainly as aſtoniſhing as any, That he was not only made fleſh, but ſent *in the likeness of sinful flesh.* What ſo oppoſite to the nature of God as ſin? And what ſo ſurpriſing, as that the Son of God, though without ſin, yet ſhould in all reſpects outwardly be like to ſinners? that he ſhould be born of a ſinner, taken for a ſinner, treated as a ſinner, and at laſt crucified with the utmoſt ignominy, as a more than ordinary ſinner? I doubt not, but thoſe angels who looked with wonder on him in the manger, looked with ſtill greater wonder on him on the croſs; that the whole hoſt of them are conſidering this with holy wonder ſtill; and that it ſhall be the theme of eternal wonder to the innumerable company about the throne. This leads me to obſerve,

2. That another circumſtance which muſt afford matter for adoring enquiry to the celeſtial ſpirits, is the ſubſtitution of an innocent perſon in the room of the guilty,

and his ſuffering from the hand of God. When man's apoſtaſy was firſt known, I reckon we may affirm with ſufficient certainty, that it could not enter into any created mind, that his recovery was poſſible. Many are even of opinion, that ſome paſſages of ſcripture carry in them an intimation, that it had been propoſed, and as it were a trial made, in the councils of heaven, among aſſembled angels, whether any remedy could be found for the guilt and apoſtaſy of man; and that none was found either able or willing to ſtand in his room; as in that of the Pſalmiſt, cited by the apoſtle to the Hebrews, chap. x. " 5, 6, 7. " Wherefore when he cometh into the world, " he ſaith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldſt not, but " a body haſt thou prepared me: In burnt-offerings " and ſacrifices for ſin, thou haſt had no pleaſure: Then " ſaid I, Lo, I come (in the volume of thy book it is writ- " ten of me) to do thy will, O God." And in the prophe- " cies of Iſaiah, chap. lix. 16. " And he ſaw that there was " no man, and wondered that there was no interceſſor; " therefore his arm brought ſalvation unto him, and his " righteouſneſs, it ſuſtained him." I will not take upon me to affirm this interpretation of theſe paſſages; but the firſt of them, which is applied by the apoſtle to Chriſt, certainly implies, that he undertook the redemption of ſinners when other ſacrifices were found ineffectual.

Now, my brethren, let us proſecute the reflection pointed out by the text. The angels had always hitherto ſeen innocence and holineſs attended with peace and felicity, and they had ſeen the apoſtate ſpirits laid under an irreverſible ſentence of condemnation. It is probable they looked upon it as manifeſtly founded on the nature of God, that he could not puniſh the innocent, and that he could not but puniſh the guilty. What aſtoniſhment then muſt it have given them, what new views of the boundleſs ſovereignty and unſearchable wiſdom of the Moſt High muſt it have opened to them, when they heard him ſaying, " Deliver " him from going down into the pit, I have found a ran- " ſom! How muſt they with wonder dwell on this part of the providence of a wiſe, holy, juſt, and gracious God, that the pure and innocent Jeſus, the beloved of the Fa-

ther, ſhould make his appearance in this lower world, the abode of guilty creatures, under manifeſt tokens of their Creator's diſpleaſure! that he ſhould not only enter on the ſcene in the weakneſs of infancy, but with every circumſtance of meanneſs and baſeneſs! How often muſt they have been put to a ſtand, what to think of the ſeverity and perſecution, the contempt and oppoſition which he met with from thoſe very ſinners whom he came to ſave!

But above all, how muſt they have been at a loſs to comprehend his being expoſed, not only to the contempt of man, but to the wrath of God! For "it pleaſed the "Lord to bruiſe him, he hath put him to grief." What muſt have been the ſurpriſe of that miniſter of providence, who was ſent "from heaven to ſtrengthen" him, when he found him under an inexpreſſible agony of ſuffering, making ſupplication with ſtrong crying and tears, ſaying, "Father, if it be poſſible, let this cup paſs from me!" And what created ſpirit is able to reach the unfathomable meaning of his complaint upon the croſs, "My God, my God, "why haſt thou forſaken me?" In the ſufferings of an innocent perſon in the room of the guilty, in the ſufferings of the well-beloved Son of God from his Father's hand, there is ſuch an unſearchable depth, as no finite underſtanding is able to comprehend. At firſt view it ſeems to contradict the rectitude and holineſs of the divine nature; but on a nearer inſpection, there is ſuch a ſtriking diſcovery of wiſdom, holineſs, juſtice, and mercy, that angels deſire with a holy curioſity to contemplate and adore it.

3. As immediately founded upon the former, another circumſtance in the plan of redemption through Chriſt, which will afford matter of wonder to the celeſtial ſpirits, is the free juſtification of ſinners, and their acceptance with God, through the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt. If it appears aſtoniſhing, that God, who diſtributes favor and puniſhment with the moſt perfect equity, ſhould puniſh the innocent, it appears equally ſo, that he ſhould ſhew favor to the guilty; that he ſhould forgive their ſins, accept their perſons, and viſit them with his loving-kindneſs, and all this for the merit and obedience of another. What! (may it be ſaid), is he not unchangeably holy?

Is he not of purer eyes than to behold iniquity? Are we not aſſured that evil cannot dwell with him, nor ſinners ſtand in his preſence? How ſhall he receive into his favor theſe offending rebels? how ſhall he take into his boſom ſuch polluted wretches? And what can be the meaning of imputation? Can perſonal worth be transferred? Can he commit ſo great an error, as to view them with complacency for the merit of another?

Muſt not this appear a new and extraordinary plan to the angels, who, by perſonal and perfect obedience, retain the favor of their Creator, and who had been hitherto ſtrangers to the influence and interceſſion of a mediator? who had ſeen no ſuch thing take place when their brethren had ſinned? Heb. ii. 16. "For verily he took not on him "the nature of angels, but he took on him the ſeed of "Abraham." The holy angels, not inclined to ſay, as more preſumptuous men too often do, "Let us continue "in ſin, that grace may abound," will rather ſay, "Let "us ſtep aſide, and ſee this great ſight." They will then ſee, that there is no way more proper for maintaining the dignity of the divine government: nay, that it is the only way by which thoſe who have been ſinners can be received into favor. They will ſee and confeſs, that there is no circumſtance whatever that tends more to level the pride of the ſinners heart, and bring him to univerſal ſubmiſſion, and abſolute ſubjection to the ſovereignty of God. I am perſuaded indeed, that even angels who never ſinned, have more of ſubmiſſion to the divine ſovereignty, and dependence on the abſolute grace of their Creator, than many are apt to imagine; yet ſurely our world is the great theatre of divine grace. The ſame infinite benignity which ſhews itſelf in heaven in favor to the worthy, is diſplayed on earth, to the aſtoniſhment of heaven itſelf, in mercy to the guilty.

Suffer me, my brethren, to embrace this opportunity of obſerving, that nothing is more groundleſs than the accuſation of men of corrupt minds, againſt the doctrine of divine grace, as encouraging to ſin. It hath the very contrary effect, and that on theſe two accounts.

(1.) It is ſo mortifying to human pride, that the power of ſin muſt be broken at leaſt, before it can be truly and cordially received. There is not ſo difficult a duty in the whole compaſs of the moral law, as an unfeigned denial of our own righteouſneſs and ſtrength, and being willing to count all things but loſs for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt. To receive forgiveneſs as mere mercy to thoſe who had deſerved to periſh, without any complaint either againſt the ſtrictneſs of the law, or the ſeverity of the ſanction, is not ſo eaſy as many ſeem to imagine, and what no man is brought to but by the Holy Ghoſt

(2.) As the ſinner muſt be really ſubjected to God the Creator, before he can lay hold of his mercy through Chriſt the Redeemer; ſo it is plain, that the moſt effectual meaſures are taken to continue and perpetuate this ſubjection. It is plain, that the infinite unmerited love of God to his ſoul, is the moſt powerful and operative principle of obedience that can dwell in the human heart: 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. "For the love of Chriſt conſtraineth "us; becauſe we thus judge, that if one died for all, then "were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which "live, ſhould not henceforth live unto themſelves, but "unto him which died for them, and roſe again." Such confidence has the ſame apoſtle in the ſtrength of this principle, he bids defiance to all trials and oppoſition: Rom. viii. 35. "Who ſhall ſeparate us from the love of "Chriſt? Shall tribulation, or diſtreſs, or perſecution, or "famine, or nakedneſs, or peril, or ſword?" And again, ver. 38, 39. "For I am perſuaded that neither death, nor "life, nor angels, or principalities, nor powers, nor things "preſent, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor "any other creature, ſhall be able to ſeparate us from the "love of God, which is in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord." Theſe great principles of ſanctification are new to the angels. When therefore they ſee the holineſs of God ſhining in the free juſtification of ſinners through Chriſt, it will add new force and new meaning to that ſong of praiſe which they are repreſented as ſinging, Rev. iv. 8. "And they "reſt not day and night, ſaying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord "God almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

4. In the *last* place, Another circumſtance in the myſtery of the goſpel which will be matter of wonder to the angels, is the application of redemption, or the manner and means of tranſlating ſinners "from darkneſs to light," and "from the power of Satan unto God." Before the plan of divine grace with regard to fallen man was opened to them, they had ſeen no examples of ſinners but the fallen angels. From their irreverſible ſentence, and blaſpheming rage in their torment, thoſe who remained in their happy ſtate, would be apt to conclude, that there could be no recovery for a creature who had once departed from his integrity at all. But when they learned ſomething of the divine purpoſe for the ſalvation of fallen man, eſpecially the amazing and unſpeakable grace that appeared in the appointment of the Mediator, and the univerſal unlimited offer of ſalvation in his name, what would be the effect? I dare ſay they would certainly conclude, that it would be received with the higheſt tranſports of joy, by all thoſe unhappy criminals who were lying under the curſe of a broken law. Accordingly the angel, in his meſſage to the ſhepherds, calls it good tidings of great joy to all people.

What then muſt have been their additional ſurpriſe, when they heard the prophet ſaying, Iſa. liii. 1. "Who "hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of "the Lord revealed?" when they ſaw that this gracious Saviour was "deſpiſed and rejected of men?" when they obſerved ſo many turn a deaf ear to the moſt importunate calls of the goſpel? when they found them cavilling themſelves out of eternal happineſs, and advancing their own blinded and bewildered reaſon in contempt of the infinite wiſdom of God? What muſt thoſe holy angels, who are filled with gratitude for creating goodneſs, think of thoſe heirs of hell, who pour contempt upon redeeming love? I cannot touch upon every thing that riſes here to our view, but I am perſuaded that the adminiſtration of the covenant of grace is as full of myſtery to the celeſtial ſpirits, as any part of the plan. Inſtead of every ſinner humbly imploring reconciliation with an offended God, our Redeemer, as a Sovereign Lord, as the Prince of Peace, firſt conquers thoſe as enemies, whom he afterwards cheriſhes as

friends. He is endued with all power for this great work; and the Pſalmiſt gives a beautiful deſcription of its influence and effect, Pſal. xlv. 3, 4, 5. "Gird thy ſword upon thy thigh, O moſt mighty; with thy glory and thy majeſty; and in thy majeſty ride proſperouſly, becauſe of truth, and meekneſs, and righteouſneſs; and thy right hand ſhall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are ſharp in the heart of the king's enemies whereby the people fall under thee." He hath ſent forth his Holy Spirit as an almighty agent, to reconcile ſinners unto God. Is there not alſo a depth of divine ſovereignty to be ſeen in the choice of the veſſels of mercy? The apoſtle Paul in the midſt of the fury of perſecuting zeal, Mary Magdalene from the midſt of the flames of unclean luſt, Zaccheus from the heart hardening crimes of covetouſneſs and oppreſſion, and many others of the chief of ſinners, have been made the trophies of divine grace, and may ſay, in the words of their great example the apoſtle Paul, 1 Tim. i. 15. "This is a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Chriſt Jeſus came into the world to ſave ſinners, of whom I am chief."

It deſerves alſo particular notice, that faith itſelf is ſaid to be the operation and the gift of God: Eph. ii. 8. "For by grace are ye ſaved, through faith; and that not of yourſelves: it is the gift of God." And indeed the change in general which conſtitutes the new nature, is conſidered as a birth or creation from above; John i. 13. "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the fleſh, nor of the will of man, but of God." It appears plainly, from many expreſs declarations of ſcripture, from the power neceſſary to overcome their obſtinacy, and from the ſeat of the diſeaſe itſelf, which lies in the will, that ſinners, while they continue ſo, inſtead of deſiring, reſiſt their recovery. What a ſubject of contemplation preſents itſelf to the angels here! What an unknown view is given them of the infinite evil and malignity of ſin! What a humbling ſenſe of created weakneſs! What a leſſon of caution for their after conduct! It hath been conjectured, not without apparent reaſon, and ſome countenance from ſcripture, that the great purpoſe which the human ſyſtem is

intended to ſerve in the univerſal kingdom of God, is to be an everlaſting monument, that a rational creature who has once departed from its innocence, and obedience to its Creator, never can again return to the ſame ſtate, but by his own almighty power and ſovereign grace. Upon the whole, from this faint view of the plan of redemption, as lying open to the attention of principalities and powers, we may ſay with the apoſtle Paul, Rom. ii. 33. "O the "depth of the riches both of the wiſdom and knowledge of "God! how unſearchable are his judgments, and his "ways paſt finding out!"

I proceed now to conclude the ſubject, by ſome practical improvement of what has been ſaid. And,

1. What you have heard will contribute, I hope, by the divine bleſſing, to ſhew the guilt of thoſe who deſpiſe the goſpel, and ſerve to remove the offence of the croſs. It required no ſmall meaſure of fortitude in the apoſtle Paul, to declare that he was not "aſhamed of the croſs of Chriſt," which at its firſt publication was "to the Jews a ſtumbling "block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs." The doctrine of the croſs, in its ſimplicity and purity, has been matter of offence in every ſucceeding age, to men of proud and worldly minds. God knows, there are not wanting many at this time, who treat the doctrine of the croſs, and ſalvation by grace, with as much contempt and inſolence as they dare. Nor is it at all impoſſible, that there may be ſome among you who are infected with theſe poiſonous and deſtructive principles. Be perſuaded, O deluded ſoul! that "the weakneſs of God is ſtronger than man," and "that the wiſdom of man is fooliſhneſs with God." This glorious and gracious plan hath the approbation and admiration of angels, though it hath the contempt of ſinners. It aſtoniſhed the angels, therefore no wonder though it ſhould aſtoniſh us. You will perhaps ſay, It is indeed aſtoniſhing above meaſure; it teaches me to believe an *incarnate God*, a *ſuffering Saviour*, the *innocent puniſhed*, and the *guilty forgiven*. It is attended with ſo many ſurpriſing circumſtances, that I cannot help ſaying, How can theſe things be? But as Samſon ſaid in his riddle, "Out of the eater came forth meat, out of the ſtrong came

"forth ſweetneſs;" ſo out of the ſuggeſtions of your corrupt minds, I would derive ſome evidence of the truth. A cunningly deviſed fable would be dreſſed by the deceiver in a manner ſuited to the human taſte; but this doctrine hath not upon it any of the marks of human wiſdom. I do not think if it had not been revealed, that it could have entered into any human mind; and therefore we may juſtly ſay, "Salvation belongeth unto God." It is becauſe he is God, and not man, that we, the children of men, "are not conſumed."

2. You may learn, from what has been ſaid, the encouragement that is given to ſinners to return to God through Chriſt. The very circumſtances that are moſt aſtoniſhing and admirable in this great diſpenſation, are the undeſerved love and unexpected condeſcenſion of God to guilty and miſerable ſinners. I know that the inward and effectual call can only be given by the Holy Ghoſt; but I know alſo, that "faith cometh by hearing, and hear-"ing by the word of God." Therefore, in expectation of the bleſſing of him who "hath the hearts of all men in "his hand, and turneth them howſoever he will," I proclaim in the hearing of every ſinner within theſe walls, "that God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only be-"gotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him might not "periſh, but might have everlaſting life." I repeat the univerſal call, that "him that cometh to him, he will in "no wiſe caſt out." Are there not many in this houſe under the power of ſin, and the curſe of a broken law? Nay, who is there that is not condemned by theſe important words, which you will find Gal. iii. 10. "Curſed is "every one that continueth not in all things which are "written in the book of the law to do them." This ſentence ſtands uncancelled againſt all who are not reconciled to God by faith in Chriſt Jeſus. Is the application difficult? Ye ſlaves of ſin, drunkards, ſwearers, profane and laſcivious jeſters, envious and malicious ſlanderers, retainers of unjuſt gain, and all without exception who are lovers of pleaſures more than lovers of God, ye ſhall be ſlain all of you; "as a bowing wall ſhall ye be, and as a "tottering fence." Remember the miſery of thoſe who

die in an unconverted ſtate: "It is a fearful thing to fall "into the hands of the living God. Who can abide with "devouring fire? Who can dwell with everlaſting burn-"ings?" Admire the infinite grace of God through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and admire the infinite wiſdom of God that hath laid help for you upon one who is "mighty to "ſave." May I not ſay, that, on this ſolemn occaſion, your Saviour ſpeaks to you, not only in his word, but from his croſs? See the juſtice of God in the croſs of Chriſt, and thence learn the evil of ſin. See the power and wrath of God in the croſs of Chriſt, and tremble at your own ſtate. See the matchleſs love of God in the croſs of Chriſt, and be perſuaded to return to him with weeping, with ſupplication, and with mourning. Let the eye of faith be pointed at the dying Saviour, and ſay unto him, "O almighty ſufferer, look down, look down from "thy triumphant infamy, pity and pierce this hard heart "with a ſenſe of guilt and miſery. Thou haſt ſaid, that "when thou ſhouldſt be lifted up from the earth, thou "wouldſt draw all men unto thee: let this promiſe be ful-"filled to my experience. *Draw me, we will run after thee.* "Lord, take away my complicated guilt; Lord, renew "and pacify my unſanctified affections, form me for thy-"ſelf, that I may ſerve thee here, and afterwards ſee thee "as thou art!"

3. From what hath been ſaid upon this ſubject, you may examine your title to partake of the holy ordinance of the Lord's ſupper; or, in other words, your right to the favor of God, and to eternal life. No diſpoſition more ſuitable, none more neceſſary, at a communion-table, than a grateful and admiring ſenſe of redeeming love, Not only the profane blaſphemer, or the ſcornful deſpiſer, is unfit to ſit down at this feaſt, but the ſelf-righteous formaliſt who never ſaw himſelf undone. It is true indeed, that when angels themſelves are put to a ſtand, all our thoughts muſt ſoon be loſt and ſwallowed up. But, my brethren, do you deſire to look into it? Do you feel a ſenſible pleaſure and delight in this ſacred employment? Do you, in ſome meaſure, ſee the glory of divine grace, though you are not able to meaſure its dimenſions? There

is no ſubject ſo obſcure and unintelligible to thoſe who are ſtrangers to the power of religion, as the myſtery of redeeming love; no ſubject ſo odious and diſtaſteful to thoſe whoſe minds are formed upon the maxims of the world, as the doctrine of ſalvation by grace. Chriſt upon a croſs, Chriſt upon a throne, Chriſt the believer's rock and refuge, the ſource of his ſtrength, and the ſource of his comfort, they are neither able to reliſh nor comprehend. All the warm expreſſions of gratitude and attachment, which are unſpeakably ſweet and raviſhing to a ſerious ſoul, appear to them in the light of enthuſiaſm and viſionary folly. But as many as it hath pleaſed God to bleſs with an inward and perſonal conviction of their loſt ſtate by nature, will ſee the greateſt beauty in this plan of ſalvation, and will rather rejoice, than ſhrink, at ſharing with their Redeemer himſelf the contempt of the world. They will ſay, with the apoſtle Paul, Gal. vi. 14. "God forbid that I ſhould glory, ſave in the croſs of our "Lord Jeſus Chriſt." There is a beautiful oppoſition ſtated by the ſame apoſtle, between a believer's underſtanding the love of Chriſt, and yet being unable to ſearch it to the bottom, in the following paſſage, Eph. iii. 17, 18, 19. "That Chriſt may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye "being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to com- "prehend with all ſaints, what is the breadth, and length, "and depth, and height; and to know the love of Chriſt, "which paſſeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with "all the fulneſs of God."

4. In the *laſt* place, From what has been ſaid, learn what is your moſt proper employment at the Lord's table. Adore and contemplate the riches of redeeming grace, that great theme which "the angels deſire to look into." Think, with humble amazement, on the boundleſs mercy of God, which reached even to you, and with the higheſt thankfulneſs on the honor to which you are admitted, of receiving the ſenſible pledges of his love. Dwell on this impenetrable myſtery of "Immanuel God with us— "God manifeſted in the fleſh." Think on this awful proof of divine juſtice and holineſs, the wrath of God poured out upon his own Son. Think on the perfection of that

atonement which is made for the ſins of the world. Rejoice in the fulneſs of that Saviour who is now made "head over all things to the church;" and draw, by faith, from his fulneſs, every neceſſary ſupply to yourſelves: and as you are now to commemorate his death, with a view to his ſecond coming, think on that "day of ſal-"vation," when he ſhall come "to be glorified in his ſaints, "and admired in all them that believe;" when you ſhall enter in triumph into the holieſt of all, where no doubt the myſtery of redemption ſhall be more fully diſcovered; when ſaints and angels ſhall jointly ſing that new ſong, Rev. v. 12. "Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain, to re-"ceive power, and riches, and wiſdom, and ſtrength, and "honor, and glory, and bleſſing;" when the whole plan of divine grace ſhall be completed and cloſed, and the mediatorial kingdom itſelf brought to a period; for "then "cometh the end, when he ſhall have delivered up the "kingdom to God, even the Father;" when confirmed angels, and redeemed ſinners, when the whole hoſt of heaven ſhall unite in one acclamation, "Hallelujah; for "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

GLORYING IN THE CROSS.

A

SERMON.

GALATIANS vi. 14.

But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

ACTION SERMON.

MY brethren, we are this day met to keep up the remembrance of our Redeemer's ſufferings and death in our room. We are to commemorate an event the moſt important, the moſt intereſting, and the moſt aſtoniſhing, that creation ever beheld. We are to contemplate a ſubject the moſt wonderful and myſterious that ever was offered to the mind of man. The *incarnation* of the *Son of God*, the *King of kings* found in the form of a *ſervant*, and the *Prince of life* expiring on an *accurſed tree*. What is this but the union of things the moſt oppoſite and ſeemingly inconſiſtent that can poſſibly be conceived? the union of the moſt diſtant extremes of ſtrength and weakneſs, glory and baſeneſs, honor and ſhame?

In a ſort of correſpondence and analogy to this great ſubject itſelf, nothing can be more oppoſite than the ſentiments formed by believers and unbelievers with regard to it. To the one it hath a dignity and majeſty unſpeakably amiable; to the other, it hath a meanneſs and baſeneſs that is ſhameful and contemptible. The Apoſtle

Paul often takes notice of this, that it was "to the Jews a "a ſtumbling-block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs;" and he often diſcovers his own inviolable attachment to his Saviour, by an open profeſſion of eſteem for thoſe circumſtances in his character and appearance which a blinded world were moſt apt to treat with deriſion and ſcorn. This is particularly the caſe in the text, "But God forbid that "I ſhould glory ſave in the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt."

By the croſs of Chriſt, in the New Teſtament, we are ſometimes to underſtand the ſufferings of believers for Chriſt's ſake; but more commonly, and, I think, evidently in this place, it ſignifies his humiliation in general, and particularly his crucifixion, to which circumſtance our attention is directed, becauſe it was the moſt baſe and ignominious of the whole. In this the apoſtle ſays he would glory: nay, he expreſſes his abhorrence at the thought of glorying in any thing elſe: "God forbid that "I ſhould glory ſave in the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt." Nothing can be more ſuited to the employment of this day, and nothing more proper to diſtinguiſh between the friends and the enemies of Chriſt, than this, when carefully attended to; for the one will undoubtedly *glory* and the other will as certainly *be aſhamed* of his croſs.

In diſcourſing further on this ſubject, what I propoſe, through divine aſſiſtance, is,

1. To explain the import of the apoſtle's glorying only in the Saviour's croſs.

2. To ſhew what good reaſon every real Chriſtian hath to glory in it. And,

3. To make ſome practical application of the ſubject.

I. In the *firſt* place, then, let us explain the import of the apoſtle's glorying only in the Saviour's croſs. What is this object in which the apoſtle ſays he would glory? Very wonderful indeed. It is, That Jeſus of Nazareth, the ſon of Mary, was ſubjected to a long life of ſorrow, reproach, and contempt: That towards the cloſe of it, he was arreſted, accuſed, condemned as a malefactor; and after innumerable and unſpeakable indignities, was at laſt nailed to a croſs, an engine of torture of the moſt cruel

and painful kind, and ſo ſhameful, that it was a manner of puniſhment appropriated to the moſt deteſted criminals of the baſeſt rank. What is there here to glory in? and what does the apoſtle mean by this expreſſion? It means,

1. That he had a high eſteem of it, as an event of the greateſt moment, and an object worthy of the higheſt regard. We do not glory in common things, but in things of peculiar dignity and worth. It was not then in his view merely what it ſeemed. He did not conſider it, ſurely, as the execution of a criminal; but ſaid, with the centurion on Mount Calvary, Truly "this was a righteous man;" Truly this was "the Son of God." He conſidered it as the effect of the infinite love of God, who ſent his only begotten Son to die for our ſins. He conſidered it as an infinite price paid for the pardon of our offences, as the only way of deliverance from guilt, as the ſure and certain pledge of peace to an awakened conſcience. In this view, how does it riſe in his eſteem? While others are diſpoſed to ſcorn, pitying their madneſs, he is conſtrained to worſhip and adore. Think of it, Chriſtians, how different were the ſentiments of his inſulting enemies and his mourning diſciples, when he hung upon the croſs. The one conſider him as a guilty ſufferer, the other as a loving Saviour. The hearts of the one were boiling with hatred, or filled with contempt; the hearts of the other were ſwallowed up in admiration, or melted with love.

2. The apoſtle's glorying in the croſs, implied his having a ſtrong, though humble confidence of his own relation to and intereſt in it. I think it is impoſſible to ſeparate this from our idea of the apoſtle's meaning. We do not glory or boaſt of any thing in which we have no concern. A man of great genius, or uncommon worth, I may admire and honor, merely for the eminent qualities of which he is poſſeſſed, and I may do him all juſtice by commendation; but I am never diſpoſed to glory in him, nor have I any title to do it unleſs he is ſomehow related to me: but if I add, that he is my child, or he is my brother, I may be truly ſaid to glory in him, or to boaſt of him, becauſe the honor that is given to him, is, in ſome meaſure reflected upon myſelf. Again, I may ſpeak of

the riches and magnificence of ſome great city; but I am then only ſaid to glory in it, if I add any circumſtance of relation; as that it is the place of my nativity, or the place of my reſidence, or the place in which I have property and intereſt. When therefore the apoſtle ſays, "God "forbid that I ſhould glory, ſave in the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt," it certainly implies a humble perſuaſion of his own intereſt in it, and his happineſs to flow from it. This indeed naturally ariſes from a real and ſpiritual diſcovery of its proper glory. None can ſee the tranſcendent beauty of this object, till they have ſeen their own guilt and miſery in the ſight of a holy God. And no ſooner do they diſcover the excellence of this atonement, its perfect ſufficiency for all, and the unreſtrained offer to all, than they fly to it as their ſecurity, and reſt on it as the ground of their hope. The word here tranſlated *glorying*, ſignifies at the ſame time *exulting*, or *rejoicing*; and therefore to glory in the croſs, is the ſame thing as to rejoice in the Saviour. The truth is, it is but ſeldom that this apoſtle mentions the death of Chriſt without ſome appropriating expreſſion: Phil. iii. 8. "Yea doubtleſs, and "I count all things but loſs, for the excellency of the "knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord: for whom I have "ſuffered the loſs of all things, and do count them but "dung, that I may win Chriſt;" Gal. ii. 20. "I am cru-"cified with Chriſt: nevertheleſs I live; yet not I, but "Chriſt liveth in me: and the life which I now live in "the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved "me and gave himſelf for me."

3. To complete the idea of the apoſtle's glorying in the croſs, it implies ſuch a ſenſe of its comparative worth, as prompts him to a public and open profeſſion of eſteem, with a ſovereign contempt of the judgment or conduct of others, who ſet themſelves in oppoſition to it. Glorying always ſignifies the declaration of our mind to others; and is not ill illuſtrated by that expreſſion of the apoſtle Paul in writing to the Romans, chapter i. 16. "For I am not "aſhamed of the goſpel of Chriſt: for it is the power of "God unto ſalvation, to every one that believeth, to the "Jew firſt, and alſo to the Greek." The oppoſition be-

tween the ſentiments of others, and his own, he often mentions; as 1 Cor. i. 18. "For the preaching of the "croſs is to them that periſh, fooliſhneſs: but unto us "which are ſaved, it is the power of God." And verſe 23. "But we preach Chriſt crucified, unto the Jews a "ſtumbling-block, and unto the Greeks fooliſhneſs; but "unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, "Chriſt the power of God, and the wiſdom of God." When he glories in the croſs, therefore, it implies an open and reſolute adherence to this deſpiſed cauſe. This meaning is particularly carried in the word *croſs*. It had been leſs wonder, if he had ſaid, he gloried in his Saviour's divine power exerted before his crucifixion, or that he gloried in his triumphant reſurrection, and exaltation to the right hand of God after it; but, inſtead of this, he ſays he gloried in his *croſs*, in his very abaſement, in what was moſt vile and contemptible.

A late very eminent writer and champion for the croſs, in a ſermon on the ſame ſubject, makes a remark to the following purpoſe: "* That through the veneration of "many ages, and the diſuſe of that puniſhment among "us in the execution of malefactors, the word *croſs* does "not carry ſo baſe an idea to our minds; but that in the "ear of a Galatian, it ſounded as if the apoſtle had ſaid, he "gloried in a gallows, a gibbet or a halter." And in a note upon this paſſage of the ſermon, when publiſhed, he expreſſes himſelf thus: "Some perſons, I am informed, "were diſguſted at theſe words, *halter*, *gallows*, *gibbet*, "they are ſo horridly contemptible: to whom I would "reply, That the croſs, in point of ignominy, implied all "this; and in point of torture, much more. Unleſs the "Engliſh reader forms to himſelf ſome ſuch image as this, "he will never be able to apprehend the ſcandalous na-"ture and ſhocking circumſtances of his divine maſter's "death. The words, I muſt confeſs, were diverſified, and "the ſentiment reiterated, on purpoſe to affect the mind "with this aſtoniſhing truth. Neither can I prevail with "myſelf to expunge the expreſſions, unleſs I could ſub-

* Mr. Hervey.

" ſtitute others of a more ignominious and execrable im-
" port in their room. Only I would beg the ſerious reader
" to ſpend a moment in the following reflection. Is it ſo,
" that a polite and delicate ear can hardly endure ſo much
" as the ſound of the words? How amazing then was the
" condeſcenſion, how charming and adorable the goodneſs
" of God's illuſtrious Son, to bear all that is ſignified by
" theſe intolerably vile terms, bear it willingly, bear it
" chearfully, for us men, and our ſalvation!"

Before concluding this head, it will be proper to obſerve, in what it was the apoſtle did not glory. There is plainly a tacit oppoſition in the form of his expreſſion, to ſome things in which others were apt to glory, and he as heartily deſpiſed: " God forbid that I ſhould glory ſave in the " croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt." He ſays in general, Phil. iii. 7. " But what things were gain to me, thoſe I " counted loſs for Chriſt." We find elſewhere, in his writings, expreſs mention of thoſe particulars which he renounced as any ſubject of boaſting. 1. His learning as a ſcholar; 2. His privileges as a Jew; 3. Even his zeal and activity as a miniſter of Chriſt. Let us conſider each of theſe by itſelf.

1. He would not glory in his learning as a ſcholar. The apoſtle Paul had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and ſeems to have been well accompliſhed in every branch of human ſcience. Yet he ſpeaks of it with great neglect, or rather with a noble diſdain, when compared with the doctrine of the croſs: 1 Cor. i. 17. " For " Chriſt ſent me not to baptize, but to preach the goſpel: " not with wiſdom of words, leſt the croſs of Chriſt ſhould " be made of none effect," And again, ver. 19, 20. " For " it is written, I will deſtroy the wiſdom of the wiſe, and " will bring to nothing the underſtanding of the prudent. " Where is the wiſe? where is the ſcribe? where is the " diſputer of this world? hath not God made fooliſh the " wiſdom of this world?" It may perhaps be aſked, What is the meaning of this renunciation of human learning and wiſdom? Is there any real oppoſition between learning and the croſs? Would not the legitimate uſe of human

wiſdom lead us to embrace it? To this I anſwer, that it ſeems to imply theſe three things.

(1) An admiration of the divine glory in that which had not on it any of the marks of human wiſdom: in conſequence of this, a ſtedfaſt adherence to the doctrine of the croſs, though thoſe who were wiſe in their own conceit might be tempted to deſpiſe it, and to deſpiſe him for its ſake. This great ſcholar, then, was not unwilling to ſuffer the deriſion and contempt of other ſcholars for his glorying in the croſs.

(2) It implies ſuch a ſuperlative admiration of this glorious and intereſting object, that all the knowledge he poſſeſſed, and the honor he could otherwiſe acquire, ſeemed to him unworthy of regard: his attention was wholly fixed upon, and his affections wholly engroſſed by, his Redeemer's croſs.

(3) It implied, that though he certainly ought, and certainly did uſe the noble parts and accompliſhments of which he was poſſeſſed, with zeal in his maſter's cauſe; yet he did it with that humility and ſelf-denial, with that noble contempt of vain embelliſhments, which ſhowed he was not building a monument to himſelf, but ſeeking the honor of his Saviour. The doctrine of the croſs ſhould be treated in a manner ſome how correſpondent to it; not with a learned and oſtentatious ſelf-ſufficiency, but with a meek and truly evangelical ſelf-denial.

Miſtake me not, my brethren: I am not ſpeaking againſt learning in itſelf; it is a precious gift of God, and may be happily improved in the ſervice of the goſpel; but I will venture to ſay, in the ſpirit of the apoſtle Paul's writings in general, and of this paſſage in particular, Accurſed be all that learning which ſets itſelf in oppoſition to the croſs of Chriſt! Accurſed be all that learning which diguiſes or is aſhamed of the croſs of Chriſt! Accurſed be all that learning which fills the room that is due to the croſs of Chriſt! And once more, Accurſed be all that learning which is not made ſubſervient to the honor and glory of the croſs of Chriſt!

Well then, the learned and eloquent apoſtle renounced the wiſdom of words; and how do we apply this in gene-

ral? By a ſmall comparative eſteem of all natural advantages; and by thinking it, in the heart, a greater honor and a higher privilege to ſit down at Chriſt's table, and to find acceptance with him, than to poſſeſs beauty, wiſdom, learning, riches, and honors in the higheſt poſſible perfection; and may God grant, that every one in this aſſembly may be able to ſay, in ſincerity, that, in what things he thinks he excels, theſe he is willing to "count "loſs for Chriſt!"

2. The apoſtle would not glory in his privileges as a Jew. This we find him affirming in many places of his writings: Phil. iii. 4. "Though I might alſo have con-"fidence in the fleſh. If any other man think that he "hath whereof he might truſt in the fleſh, I more: Circum-"ciſed the eighth day, of the ſtock of Iſrael, of the tribe of Ben-"jamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a "Phariſee; concerning zeal, perſecuting the church; touch-"ing the righteouſneſs which is in the law, blameleſs." Toward the latter end of the Jewiſh commonwealth, there was a very prevailing and groſs miſtake among them, to look upon their external privileges as entitling them to the favor of God, and making a difference between them and others. We have reaſon to be ſenſible, that much of the ſame diſpoſition is ready to adhere to men in every age. But one great deſign of the goſpel is, to level the pride of man, to throw down all diſtinction in point of merit before God, and to ſhow, that the power of the Redeemer is equally neceſſary to, and equally ſufficient for, all without exception: Rom. iii. 22. "Even the righ-"teouſneſs of God which is by faith of Jeſus Chriſt unto "all, and upon all them that believe; for there is no dif-"ference." Rom. x. 12. "For there is no difference be-"tween the Jew and the Greek: for the ſame Lord over "all, is rich unto all that call upon him." Col. iii. 11. "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumciſion nor "uncircumciſion, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: "but Chriſt is all, and in all."

3. The apoſtle did not glory in his perſonal character, not even in his zeal and activity as a miniſter of Chriſt. This appears through the whole of his writings, where he is at particular pains to deſtroy every foundation of

boaſting or glorying in ourſelves: Rom. iii. 24.—28. "Being juſtified freely by his grace, through the redemp-"tion that is in Jeſus Chriſt: whom God hath ſet forth "to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare "his righteouſneſs for the remiſſion of ſins that are paſt, "through the forbearance of God; to declare, I ſay, at this "time his righteouſneſs: that he might be juſt, and the "juſtifier of him which believeth in Jeſus. Where is "boaſting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? "Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude, "that a man is juſtified by faith, without the deeds of "the law." Nay, we find that all his public ſervices he conſiders as quite unfit ſubjects for boaſting, even when he is obliged to mention them for his own vindication; 1 Cor. xv. 9, 10. "For I am the leaſt of the apoſtles, that am "not meet to be called an apoſtle, becauſe I perſecuted the "church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I "am: and his grace which was beſtowed upon me, was "not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they "all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with "me."

I am perſuaded that thoſe who, from really Chriſtian principles, ſerve God in their generation with the greateſt zeal, will be moſt ready to renounce all plea of merit upon that account. I have read with pleaſure the following account of the temper expreſſed by John Knox, that eminent inſtrument in the reformation, when he was drawing near to his diſſolution. Some perſon preſent mentioned to him, what comfort he might now have in his extraordinary labor and great uſefulneſs in the church: to whom he anſwered, "Forbear to puff up the fleſh with vanity, "to which it is of itſelf ſufficiently prone. The port I "would be in at, is that of the free grace of God, through "the merits of my bleſſed Saviour." The truth is, theſe are but the ſentiments which ſhall not only go with us to death, but continue with us to eternity. A deep ſenſe of redeeming love, and grateful celebration of the Redeemer's glory, is not only the language of the church on earth, but the delightful worſhip of the church triumphant in heaven: Rev. v. 11, 12, 13. "And I beheld, and I heard

" the voice of many angels round about the throne, and " the beaſts and the elders: and the number of them was " ten thouſand times ten thouſand, and thouſands of thou- " ſands; ſaying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb " that was ſlain, to receive power, and riches, and wiſdom, " and ſtrength, and honor, and glory, and bleſſing. And " every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, " and under the earth, and ſuch as are in the ſea, and all " that are in them, heard I, ſaying, Bleſſing, and honor, " and glory, and power be unto him that ſitteth upon the " throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

II. We proceed now to the *ſecond* general head of diſcourſe, viz. To conſider what reaſon every real Chriſtian hath to glory in the croſs. This indeed opens to us a ſubject of the moſt amazing compaſs and extent. Though there is nothing here but what is vile and contemptible to an unbelieving worldly mind; by the eye of faith, every thing that is wonderful, amiable, and valuable, is diſcovered in the higheſt perfection. I cannot particularly enumerate every ſubject of glorying in the croſs; and therefore ſhall juſt point out to you the three following ſubjects of meditation, which though they often run into one another, may be conſidered in diſtinct and ſeparate lights. 1. The glory of divine perfection ſhines in it in the brighteſt manner. 2. The riches of divine grace are manifeſted in it to the moſt aſtoniſhing degree. 3. The ſanctifying efficacy of it is ſo tranſcendently ſuperior to that of any other mean, as ſhows it to have been the appointment of infinite wiſdom.

1. The glory of divine perfection ſhines in it in the brighteſt manner. Would we directly contemplate the glory of the inviſible God, as it ſhines in his works and ways? let us look upon the croſs. It hath been ſometimes, and very juſtly, ſaid of the works of God, that they have uſually in them ſomething much more wonderful and excellent than appears at firſt view. It hath alſo been further obſerved, that, in this reſpect, there is a complete contraſt and oppoſition between the works of the Creator and thoſe of the creature. Every thing that flows from

God, the more ſtrictly we examine it, and the more perfectly we know it, the more we ſhall admire it; but every work of the creature, the more perfectly it is known, the more its inherent weakneſs always appears. This diſcovers itſelf, even in comparing the produce of the field with the effects of human art. Naturaliſts obſerve, that the fineſt and moſt admirable human manufactures, when ſeen, as by a finer ſenſe, with the aſſiſtance of a microſcope, appears quite coarſe and irregular; but that if you look at a pile of graſs, or any thing natural, with the ſame aſſiſtance, you will ſee ſtill more exquiſite and delicate ſtrokes of the almighty operator.

If this is the caſe even in the material productions of natural power, how much more muſt it be ſo in the unſearchable myſteries of God's ſpiritual kingdom? In none will it hold more than in this chief of the works of God, this glorious though deſpiſed object, the croſs of Chriſt. Here indeed the glory of God appears in all its luſtre. It appears in ſo ſtrong and ſo various lights, that the higheſt angels are employed, delighted, and loſt in the contemplation of it: 1 Pet. i. 12. "Which things the angels de-" ſire to look into." Eph. iii. 10. "To the intent that "now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly "places, might be known by the church the manifold "wiſdom of God. O what a diſplay of power in the union of God and man! What an almighty arm was required to make theſe things meet, which were infinitely diſtant! The Creator of the ends of the earth born of a woman! the Self-exiſtent become a feeble infant! the Lord of glory covered with ſhame! The Judge of all condemned to ſuffer! The Author of life giving up the ghoſt!

What unſearchable wiſdom appears in finding a victim able to bear almighty vengeance! in finding a way by which ſin might be at once puniſhed and pardoned, juſtice fully ſatisfied, even where mercy is extended! Little wonder indeed that the angels deſire to look into this myſtery. They had taſted the fruits of divine benignity in the happineſs of innocent creatures; they had ſeen the glory of divine juſtice in the perdition of the rebel-angels;

but the croſs of Chriſt was the firſt thing that diſcovered to them the glory of divine mercy, in pardoning the chief of ſinners, without in the leaſt obſcuring the brightneſs either of juſtice or holineſs, nay to the illuſtration of both. In the croſs of Chriſt there is a more awful and penetrating view of the juſtice and holineſs of God, than could have been given by the irreparable deſtruction of the whole race of Adam. And at the ſame time, his not "ſparing his "own Son," but "delivering him up for us all," is a more aſtoniſhing effect of love, than pardon without ſatisfaction could have been, had that been a thing in itſelf poſſible. There is no end or meaſure to our views of this ſubject; but I hope many of you will now ſay, with the apoſtle Paul, what I dare ſay he has not yet done repeating in heaven, Rom. xi. 33. "O the depth of the riches both of the wiſ- "dom and knowledge of God! how unſearchable are his "judgments, and his ways paſt finding out!"

2. The riches of divine grace are manifeſted in the croſs of Chriſt to the moſt aſtoniſhing degree. It is not merely a wonderful work of God, which all his intelligent creatures may behold with admiration, but it is a deſign in which we ourſelves have an immediate and an infinite concern: For, Iſa. liii. 5. "He was wounded for our "tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our iniquities: the "chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him, and with "his ſtripes we are healed." O what an amazing diſplay of unmerited love! Every divine perfection indeed appears in it very clearly, but chiefly love. The tender mercy of our God predominates, actuates, and reigns through the whole. Chriſt's undertaking, in general, is the fruit and evidence of the everlaſting love of God: John iii. 16. "For God ſo loved the world, that he gave "his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him, "ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life." Salvation, in the whole of its purchaſe and effect, was the fruit and expreſſion of the infinite love of Chriſt: Rev. i. 5, 6. "Unto him that loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins "in his own blood, and hath made us kings and prieſts "unto God, and his Father; to him be glory and domi- "nion for ever and ever. Amen." The believing ſoul

is never more at a loſs than when attempting to confeſs its obligations to redeeming love. The human mind never feels its weakneſs more than when it attempts to conceive, or to illuſtrate, this truly incomprehenſible ſubject.

The grace of redemption may be conſidered and illuſtrated in a great variety of lights: From the greatneſs of the miſery from which we are delivered; for "we are "ſaved from wrath through him:" From the greatneſs of the happineſs to which we are entitled; for we are made "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Chriſt:" From the guilt and unworthineſs of the objects of this love; for it was "when we were enemies" that "we were reconci-"led to God by the death of his Son." But beſides theſe conſiderations, there is more than enough of divine mercy to excite our wonder in the croſs of Chriſt, the price paid for our redemption.

Great ſufferings uſually melt the heart to ſympathy and tenderneſs, though we have no immediate concern in them at all: but how much more muſt every ſource of tenderneſs be opened, when we conſider the ſufferer as an innocent perſon, and as ſuffering in our room! Remember the perſon, remember the nature, remember the greatneſs, remember the end, of his ſuffering; the eternal Son of God, the great Immanuel, covered with ſhame, dragged to an unrighteous tribunal, not to abide the decrees of juſtice, but to bear the effects of blinded rage! See him, O ſhocking ſight! blindfolded, buffeted, and ſpit upon, ſeverely ſcourged, crowned with thorns, arrayed in purple, adored in deriſion! See him nailed to the croſs! O ſhameful, O tormenting, O moſt accurſed manner of death! Is it poſſible to conceive the grace of this amazing humiliation, this infinite condeſcenſion? I would even call it incredible condeſcenſion, but that happily it carries upon it this great truth, That God's ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts. Apply it therefore, O ſinner! and ſee how it magnifies the love of God. Was all this abaſement, all this ſhame, all this ſuffering for me? and ſhall I not glory in the croſs? Shall I even glory in any thing but the croſs? As it magnifies the di-

vine power, as it magnifies the divine mercy, ſo it magnifies the ſinner. Is it any leſs to our honor than to his ſhame? We can never appear ſo valuable as when our ſalvation is purchaſed by our Saviour's dying groans.

3. In the laſt place, The real Chriſtian has reaſon to glory in the croſs, for its efficacy as a principle of ſanctification. This is plainly implied in the clauſe immediately following the text: for "by it the world is crucified "unto me, and I unto the world." The apoſtle certainly has this alſo in view, when he celebrates the doctrine of the croſs as the wiſdom and the power of God unto ſalvation. And indeed to every believer the croſs, conſidered only as the truth, and as operating by faith on the underſtanding and heart, is ſuch an argument to duty, as there is not another in the whole compaſs of human knowledge that may once be compared to it. Does any thing ſet in ſo ſtrong a light the obligation of God's moſt holy law? Does any thing ſet in ſo ſtrong a light the infinite evil of ſin? the infinite holineſs of God? the infinite danger of ſin? Muſt not the reflection of every believer be, "Who can ſtand before this Holy Lord God? If ſuch "things be done in the green tree, what ſhall be done in "the dry?"

But what is the great ſource, evidence, ſum, and perfection of ſanctification? Is it not the love of God? And how ſhall this be produced? how ſhall it be preſerved and improved, in ſo effectual a manner, as by believing views of the croſs of Chriſt, the moſt tender and coſtly expreſſion of his love to us? 1 John iv. 19. "We love him; be- "cauſe he firſt loved us." How does this fill the Chriſtian with indignation againſt ſin, which he muſt conſider as "crucifying him to himſelf afreſh!" &c. How does it endear to him his Saviour's commands! how does it inſpire him with zeal in doing his will, and fortitude in ſuffering for his cauſe! Will any thing ſo effectually determine us to love our fellow-creatures, as his command and example? Will any thing ſo effectually perſuade us to diſcharge the moſt important duties to others, I mean, ſeeking their eternal welfare, as the value of a precious ſoul eſtimated by the croſs? Will any thing ſo effectually diſ-

poſe us to the moſt difficult duties to others, I mean meekneſs, patience and forgiveneſs, as the great debt cancelled to us by his ſufferings on the croſs? Is it poſſible that his own words, in that awful ſeaſon, can ever be forgotten, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what "they do?" I cannot at preſent enlarge further on theſe views; but well might the apoſtle, and well may every Chriſtian, glory in his Maſter's croſs, for the unſpeakable benefit he receives from it: For, 1 Cor. i. 30. "Of him "are ye in Chriſt Jeſus, who of God is made unto us "wiſdom, and righteouſneſs, and ſanctification, and re-"demption."

I proceed now to make ſome practical application of what hath been ſaid. And,

1. From what hath been ſaid, you may learn what is the great and leading doctrine of the goſpel, the ſum and ſubſtance of the truth as it is in Jeſus, *viz.* the doctrine of the croſs, or Chriſt ſuffering the wrath of God, to redeem us from hell. This was the great deſign formed in the councils of peace, early intimated in the firſt promiſe, gradually unfolded in after ages, and completely manifeſted in the fullneſs of time. The Saviour was the ſubject of the ancient promiſes, the hope of the ancient patriarchs, the ſubſtance of the New-Teſtament diſpenſation, and the burden of the everlaſting goſpel. He ſaith of himſelf, Rev. i. 8. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and "the ending, ſaith the Lord, which is, and which was, "and which is to come, the Almighty." On his glorious character, and precious blood, the inſpired apoſtles delighted to dwell. Did they then miſtake their meſſage? did they miſlead their hearers? No; it was, and it ſhall ever remain an unchangeable truth, what the apoſtle declares, 1 Cor. iii. 11. "For other foundation can no man "lay, than that is laid, which is Jeſus Chriſt."

On this foundation, every thing that is agreeable to the will of God, in doctrine or practice, muſt be built. Every other part of the word of God derives light and beauty from the croſs; every other part of the word of God derives force and meaning from the croſs; every other pay

of the word of God derives life and efficacy from the croſs. Let us therefore remember its influence and value, and never loſe view of it. Let us deſpiſe the ignorant reproaches of thoſe who ſlander it as unfavorable to moral virtue. I dare not ſay indeed, that it is very favorable to an oſtentatious parade of human merit; but I am ſure it is the only way of producing ſelf-denied obedience to the will of God.

2. From what hath been ſaid, you may ſee the guilt and danger of the enemies of the croſs, and at the ſame time may learn who they are who deſerve this character. They may be divided into two diſtinct claſſes: 1. Thoſe who are enemies in principle to the croſs, who have no ſenſe of their own unworthineſs, of the evil of ſin, or the neceſſity of an atonement. Such may ſometimes retain the name of Chriſtians, and contend that they ought to retain it, while they oppoſe, with the utmoſt virulence and malice, its moſt important and fundamental truth. I cannot think, without horror, on the guilt and ingratitude of all ſuch perſons, and the fearful puniſhment which they ſhall meet with at laſt, when this deſpiſed Saviour "ſhall "come in the clouds, and every eye ſhall ſee him." 2. They are alſo enemies to this truth who are governed in temper and practice by a ſpirit directly oppoſite to that of the croſs. The ſhame and reproach which the croſs implied are not ſufficiently attended to, nor the humility and ſelf-denial neceſſary to all thoſe who would be the followers of a crucified maſter. Are there not many who will have no religion but what will be pliable, and accommodate itſelf to the maxims of the world? Loaded with prudence, they are unwilling to break meaſures, either with the good or the bad. Dazzled with human pomp, they deſpiſe every thing in religion, but what, either in ſubſtance or circumſtances, is grateful to human pride. Faſhionable practices, however dangerous or vicious, they have not courage to oppoſe. It were well, if they would conſider the ancient form of confeſſion at baptiſm. Do you renounce the devil, and all his works? I do. Do you renounce the world, its pomps, its pleaſures, and its vanities? I do. And this was not merely Heatheniſh

idolatry, and ceremonies of falſe worſhip, but that indulgence of vanity, and that gratification of appetite, in which worldly men, in every age, place their ſupreme delight.

3. What hath been ſaid may ſerve for the ſupport and conſolation of real believers, under the trials to which they are expoſed in the preſent ſtate. It is melancholy to think, how frequently, and how eaſily, we are unhinged by diſtreſs; what diſcontent and impatience we are apt to diſcover under ſuffering. Alas! my brethren, are you not aſhamed of impatience, when you conſider the unparalleled ſufferings of your Redeemer in your room? A believing view of the Saviour's croſs, one would think, might ſtop every mouth, and compoſe every murmuring thought. Has he ſuffered ſo much for us? and ſhall we refuſe to ſuffer from him, and for him? His ſufferings ſhould make us patient, as they ſhew us the evil of ſin, and what we have deſerved. Did we really deſerve avenging wrath? and ſhall we dare to complain of fatherly correction? Did he ſuffer with patience who did no ſin? and ſhall we complain who are puniſhed leſs than our iniquities deſerve? His ſufferings ſhould teach us patience, becauſe they take away the bitterneſs and malignity of our ſufferings, and turn them from a poiſon to a medicine: he hath exhauſted, if I may ſpeak ſo, the whole wrath of God, and left nothing for us but what is highly ſalutary. And as he hath changed the nature of all the ſufferings of life, he hath taken away the ſting of death, which is the end of all our ſuffering. That blood which ſpeaks peace to the wounded ſpirit, ſhould be a healing balm to the wounded body.

But of all the different kinds of ſuffering, if we pretend to glory in the croſs, we ought to be leaſt afraid of the reproach thrown upon us for adherence to our duty. To glory in the croſs, is indeed to glory in ſhame. The form of expreſſion uſed with regard to Peter and John, Acts v. 41. is very remarkable. They departed from the preſence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to ſuffer ſhame for his name. It would greatly tend to fortify us againſt this trial, if we would lay up in our

hearts what hath been ſaid on the doctrine of the croſs. If it is impoſſible to avoid it, we muſt needs ſit down compoſedly under it. And if our attachment to our great maſter is what it ought to be, we will chearfully follow him even without the camp, bearing his reproach.

4. In the *laſt* place, By what hath been ſaid, you may try your title to ſit down at the Lord's table, and learn your employment there. This ordinance is a ſenſible memorial of our Redeemer's croſs and paſſion. It was on the croſs that his body was broken, and his blood ſhed, for you. Are you then to commemorate it? You cannot do ſo, either in an acceptable or profitable manner, unleſs you can join the apoſtle in glorying in it. Have you ſeen any thing of the excellence and amiableneſs of this deſpiſed object? Nothing ſo taſteleſs and inſipid to the proud and ſelf-righteous; nothing ſo delightful and refreſhing to the broken in heart. Have you ſeen any thing of the glory of the true God, in the ſufferings of Chriſt? and can you ſay with the apoſtle Paul, Heb. ii. 10. "It became "him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all "things, in bringing many ſons unto glory, to make the "Captain of their ſalvation perfect through ſufferings." Do you ſee the glory of infinite mercy in the croſs? and are your hearts drawn with the cords of love to him who "loved you, and gave himſelf for you?" Have you experienced the ſanctifying influence of the croſs? are your corruptions weakened and mortified by looking upon it? Is it your unfeigned deſire, that they may be finally deſtroyed by it?

To draw to a concluſion of the ſubject: I cannot point out your duty to you in a manner more ſuited to this day's employment, or more proper for your after ſecurity and comfort, than to turn the three reaſons for glorying in the croſs into the form of exhortations.——I beſeech you, my beloved hearers, contemplate the glory of God in the croſs of Chriſt. See him, infinite in power, infinite in wiſdom, infinite in holineſs. You may ſee a faint emblem of his glory in the book of nature; but you can only ſee his tranſcendent majeſty in the book of God. And may "he who at firſt commanded the light to ſhine out of dark-

" neſs, ſhine in your hearts, to give you the light of the " knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jeſus " Chriſt !"—Adore and apply the riches of divine grace. Let the convinced, fearful, trembling ſinner, fly to this atoning blood, reſt his hope upon it, and be ſecure.—And neglect not to uſe the croſs of Chriſt for mortifying your corruptions. Let your views of it now be lively and ſtrong, and carry the ſame impreſſion away, to be your great preſervative from daily temptation. Make no image of the croſs in your houſes ; but let the remembrance of it be ever on your hearts. One lively view of this great object will cool the flames of unclean luſt : one lively view of this great object will make the unjuſt man quit his hold: one lively view of this tremendous object will make the angry man drop his weapon : nay, one look of mercy from a dying Saviour will make even the covetous man open his heart. In one word, believing views of the croſs of Chriſt will unite the Chriſtian more and more to a reconciled God, will make his preſence comfortable, his worſhip delightful, and excite a humble longing for that time when we ſhall ſee him no more through the help of theſe elements, but as he is in himſelf, exalted on his throne, where his worſhip and ſervice are everlaſting.

THE WORLD CRUCIFIED BY THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

A

SERMON.

GALATIANS vi. 14. laſt clauſe.

—— *By whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.*

THE character of a ſervant of God is ſometimes deſcribed in ſcripture by particular diſpoſitions or inſtances of obedience, and ſometimes by a general view of the ſpirit that runs through the whole of his temper and carriage. Each of theſe ways has its own advantage and uſe. Each of them is to be found in its proper order in the holy ſcriptures, and ſtands there as a proof of their fulneſs and perfection. The whole of this paſſage, but particularly the laſt clauſe, upon which I am now to inſiſt, is of the general kind, and, in the apoſtle's own example, gives us a very comprehenſive view of what ought to be the temper and diſpoſition of every real Chriſtian: "By "whom," that is, by Chriſt crucified, or, "by which," that is to ſay, by the croſs of Chriſt, "the world is cruci-"fied unto me, and I unto the world."

This deſcription will ſerve, if carefully attended to, as a trial and touchſtone of ſincerity; and, in particular, will ſerve to diſtinguiſh real religion from ſome of its moſt deceitful and plauſible counterfeits. At the ſame time, it will furniſh the ſincere Chriſtian with very important di-

rections for his preſervation and improvement, by pointing out the moſt fatal and dangerous rocks of temptation, which it is his intereſt to avoid. Having explained the words in my diſcourſe upon the former part of the verſe, I now only obſerve, that the propoſition contained in them is, "That the world is crucified to the believer, and he to "the world, by the croſs of Chriſt." This naturally reſolves itſelf into two parts, which I propoſe to conſider diſtinctly, *viz.*

1. What is the import of a believer's being crucified to the world, and the world to him.

2. What influence the croſs of Chriſt hath in producing this effect. Having done this, I will,

3. Make a practical improvement of the ſubject.

I. First, then, we are to conſider the import of a believer's being crucified to the world, and the world to him. This ſeems to deſerve the greater attention, that through the whole New Teſtament, there is a direct oppoſition ſtated between the world and the diſciples of Chriſt; an oppoſition of character, an oppoſition of intereſt, and a continual conflict in conſequence of both; John xv. 18. 19. "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me "before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world "would love his own; but becauſe ye are not of the "world, but I have choſen you out of the world, therefore "the world hateth you." In this paſſage the world ſeems to be taken chiefly for the men of the world, or its inhabitants. It is, however, taken in a more extenſive ſenſe in the two following: 1 John ii. 15. "Love not the world, "neither the things that are in the world. If any man "love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "1 John v. 4. For whatſoever is born of God, over-"cometh the world: and this is the victory that over-"cometh the world, even our faith." Here, no doubt, it ſignifies not only men, and our hopes or fears from them, but every thing in the preſent life that may be the object of carnal affection, of ſinful or undutiful attachment.

The expreſſion in the text, "The world is crucified to "me" is figurative; but abundantly plain, and exceeding-

ly ſtrong. It might be conſidered very extenſively, and ſeveral things upon it may probably afterwards occur. Let it ſuffice at preſent to make two obſervations. 1. This intimates the ſincerity and heartineſs of the believer's oppoſition to the world. It muſt be remembered, that crucifixion was a death the moſt painful and diſgraceful that could poſſibly be inflicted. When this image therefore, is borrowed, and applied to the believer's ſeparation from the world, it implies not only an indifference to it, but the moſt ſovereign contempt of it, from the deepeſt and ſtrongeſt conviction of its abſolute vanity. Nay, as no perſons were crucified, but who were hated as well as deſpiſed by their judges, to be crucified to the world, implies an unfeigned abhorrence of its pollution, and a dread of being enſlaved by it.

2. The ſame thing intimates the perpetuity and fixedneſs of the Chriſtian's oppoſition to the world. Thoſe who were crucified were devoted to deſtruction, when they were nailed to the tree; they were not only tormented for a ſeaſon, but fixed there till death concluded the ſcene: ſo I apprehend the apoſtle intended to ſignify, by this expreſſion, his final ſeparation from the world, without the leaſt hope or deſire of ever returning to it.

After taking this ſhort and general view of the import of the expreſſion, it will be neceſſary more diſtinctly and fully to conſider what is implied in being crucified to the world. This ought to be done with the greater care, that it is at once an important and difficult duty. To be truly crucified to the world, I am afraid is exceeding rare; and even thoſe who are ſo in ſincerity, upon the whole, are far from being ſo in the degree that they ought to be. The puniſhment of crucifixion is a ſtrong image, in one particular, of the believer's character. Though it was certain death, it was ſlow and lingering; ſo worldlineſs, in many perſons, continues long vigorous, and dies very ſlowly.

There is another reaſon for treating this ſubject with care, that men are very apt to conſider ſuch expreſſions as extravagant, and carrying matters an unreaſonable length. Miſtaking the nature of the duty, they are neither con-

cerned themſelves to practiſe it, nor will they allow that any body elſe does ſo in reality. I will therefore endeavor to ſhew you, 1. What is not implied in crucifying the world; 2. Wherein it immediately and properly conſiſts.

On the *first* of theſe, I beg your attention to the following particulars.

1. The world's being crucified to us, does not imply that there is any evil in the natural world, conſidered in itſelf, and as the work of God. The whole frame of nature, as it was produced and is preſerved by God, and the whole courſe of Providence, as conducted by him, are perfectly faultleſs. We may even ſay more, the creation carries on it ſuch an image of its Maker, as the materials are able to bear. In this view, it is our duty to look upon the world with reverence, and adore the glory of God in all its parts, from the higheſt to the loweſt. The evil ariſes wholly from ourſelves, and our diſpoſition to ſin. When we ſay a corrupt enticing deceitful world, it is but another way of ſpeaking for the corruption of the human heart.

2. It does not imply that we ſhould undervalue or be inſenſible of preſent mercies. Every gift of God is good, if it be received with thankfulneſs, and uſed with ſobriety. The more the world is crucified as it ought to be, the more we will diſcern the goodneſs of God, even in common mercies. It is matter of daily experience, and well worthy of obſervation, that thoſe who idolize the world moſt, as an object of ſinful deſire, do uſually deſpiſe the world moſt, as the ſubject or ground of thankfulneſs to God. A voluptuous, ambitious, or envious perſon, who purſues the world with eagerneſs, and never thinks he has enough, is commonly diſcontented and unthankful. His eyes are ſo wiſtfully fixed on what he wants, that he neither remembers nor values what he already has. On the contrary, the ſelf-denied and mortified Chriſtian, though deſpiſing the world as an object of purſuit, is yet deeply ſenſible of the kindneſs of Providence, in his daily preſervation, or liberal proviſion. A mind formed upon the principles of the goſpel, may look down with contempt upon the luſtre of a throne, and yet know the value, and feel a ſenſe of gratitude in the poſſeſſion of a crumb.

3. It doth not imply that the world is uſeleſs to a believer, even with regard to his ſpiritual benefit. It is not only certain that he may have, but that he will have, the ſanctified improvement of every ſtate: Rom. viii. 28. "And we know that all things work together for good, "to them that love God, to them who are the called ac- "cording to his purpoſe." The ſame mercies which make a wicked man inſolent, make a good man thankful. They alſo extend his power of doing good to others. You may ſee, by our Saviour's advice, how the world may be profitably employed: Luke xvi. 9. "And I ſay unto you, "Make to yourſelves friends of the mammon of unrigh- "teouſneſs; that when ye fail, they may receive you in- "to everlaſting habitations." See alſo the account of his procedure at the great day, Matth. xxv. 34.—36. Then "ſhall the King ſay unto them on his right hand, Come, "ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared "for you from the foundation of the world. For I was "an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirſty, and "ye gave me drink: I was a ſtranger, and ye took me "in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was ſick, and ye vi- "ſited me: I was in priſon, and ye came unto me."

4. It does not imply that we ought to retire from the employment or buſineſs of the world altogether. Though there is a manifeſt danger in being too much involved in buſineſs, as well as too much devoted to pleaſure; it is an error, on the other hand, to place religion in voluntary poverty, in monkiſh auſterity, or uncommanded maceration of the body. This is not doing, but deſerting our duty: it is not crucifying the world, but going out of it; it is not overcoming the world, but flying from it.

But let us now conſider, directly and poſitively, what is implied in the world's being crucified to us, and we to the world. And that the after illuſtrations may be at once more intelligible and more convincing, it will not be improper to begin by ſaying, in general, that we muſt be crucified to the world in thoſe reſpects in which man, at his firſt apoſtaſy, fell away to the world from God. While man continued in innocence, the world, which in itſelf

is without ſtain, was never put to any but a ſacred uſe. It was then a theatre of divine glory, as indeed it is ſtill; but not a ſcene of human guilt, as it is now. It was intended for a place of trial, however, in which man was left to the freedom of his own will; and therefore it was capable of being abuſed. Thence came that ſacrilegious attachment to the world, from which it is ſo much our intereſt to be effectually delivered. But to explain this matter a little more at large, the world muſt be crucified to the believer in the following reſpects; which, though I confeſs they all come at laſt to the ſame thing, yet I think it is proper and neceſſary to mention diſtinctly.

1. *As it is the subject and occasion of, or a temptation to sin.* It is very plain, that however faultleſs and excellent the whole works of nature and providence are in themſelves, from the corruption of our nature they become the food of carnal affection, the fuel of concupiſcence. The very liberality of Providence, and rich proviſion made for the ſupply of our wants and the gratification of our appetites, becomes a temptation to groſs ſenſuality, and criminal indulgence. This is well deſcribed by the apoſtle John, 1 Ep. ii. 16. "For all that is in the world, "the luſt of the fleſh, and the luſt of the eyes, and the "pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." In this view, we ought to hold it in the utmoſt abhorrence. But how is this to be done? By ſeriouſly conſidering the unhappy and powerful influence it hath in ſoliciting us to evil. Inſtead of being taken with its charms, we ought to dread their force, we ought to be ſenſible how unequal we are to the conflict, and how unable, without ſuperior ſtrength, to keep ourſelves from its pollution.

When we ſee perſons in honor and power, and are tempted to envy their diſtinguiſhed rank in life, we ought to conſider how naturally exaltation tends to intoxicate the mind, how few are able to bear honor or reputation with humility, and how little reaſon we have to confide in our own ſteadineſs and reſolution. When we ſee the ſplendor of a rich and affluent ſtate, we ought to conſider the ſtrong temptation which commonly ariſes from riches, to contempt of God, oppreſſion of others, ſenſuality of temper,

and forgetfulneſs of eternity. Suffer me, on this ſubject, to make every man his own reprover. How few are there in a rich and affluent ſtate, whoſe conduct in the application of riches you can wholly approve! Are you not conſtantly blaming them for covetouſneſs and oppreſſion on the one hand, or prodigality on the other? How is it, then, that you entertain no ſuſpicion that you yourſelves would be led aſtray by the ſame means? Is not this a ſtrange infatuation, and blindneſs to divine truth, even where every word of the Spirit of God is ratified by daily experience?

When we ſee and are tempted to envy the votaries of pleaſure, thoſe who live delicately and fare ſumptuouſly every day, we ought to conſider, what a dangerous enſnaring thing appetite is, how it ſteals upon men inſenſibly, and at laſt enſlaves them abſolutely; how hard it is for the moſt cautious to ſet proper bounds to it, as well as how dreadful and fatal the exceſſive indulgence of it. To crucify the world, then, as a temptation to ſin, is not to conſider its charms by themſelves, but always in connection with their probable effects. This ſeems to have ſuggeſted the wiſe and well-conceived prayer of the prophet Agur, Prov. xxx. 7, 8, 9. "Two things have I required "of thee, deny me them not before I die. Remove far "from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor "riches, feed me with food convenient for me: leſt I be "full, and deny thee, and ſay, Who is the Lord? or leſt "I be poor, and ſteal, and take the name of my God in "vain." On the ſame thing is founded the advice of Solomon, with regard to the ſin of ſenſuality: Proverbs xxiii. 31. "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, "when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itſelf aright."

2. The world muſt be crucified to the believer, *as it would be his ſupreme felicity and chief good.* This is no otherwiſe to be diſtinguiſhed from the former conſideration, than as the general courſe and ſtream of our affections differs from particular acts of tranſgreſſion. It is very neceſſary, however, to attend to it; for there are many under the habitual government of a worldly mind, who do

not think themſelves, and who perhaps are not juſtly chargeable with groſs acts of irregularity and exceſs. I bleed inwardly to think, how many of the ordinary profeſſors of religion are here included. How many are there, who, if conſcience would be faithful, muſt confeſs, that the favor of God, his worſhip, his ſabbaths, his people, are not their ſupreme delight! Yet that this is eſſential to real religion, or rather is the ſubſtance of all true religion, I think we have repeated aſſurances in the holy ſcriptures. It is plain from the language of the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. lxxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none "upon earth that I deſire beſides thee." It is plain from the ſum of the moral law, Luke x. 27. "Thou ſhalt love "the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy "ſoul, and with all thy ſtrength, and with all thy mind; "and thy neighbor as thyſelf;" as alſo from that trying paſſage, Matth. x. 37. "He that loveth father or mother "more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth "ſon or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me."

Take heed then, my brethren, to this important truth. If the world would keep its diſtance, ſo to ſpeak, it might be eſteemed, and uſed, in its proper place, and to its proper end; but if it will needs pretend to be what it is not, and to promiſe what it cannot give, we muſt take it for a deceiver, and hold it in deteſtation. Your Maker formed you for his own glory: He muſt be the reſt and conſolation of your ſouls, or they never ſhall have reſt; he muſt be their happineſs, or they ſhall be miſerable for ever. But if the world would ſeem to be your home, if it promiſeth you content and ſatisfaction, if the poſſeſſion of it is the ultimate end at which you aſpire, ſo that you do not heartily, and with affection, look any further, it is uſurping its Creator's throne; and therefore down with the idol, and tread it in the duſt.

Is not this the great queſtion with regard to us all, Whether the objects of faith, or of ſenſe, things preſent or things to come, God or the world, has the poſſeſſion of our hearts? A believer who will thankfully receive and uſe the bleſſings of a preſent world for their proper end, will notwithſtanding hold it, and all its poſſeſſions, in the high-

eſt degree of contempt, when compared with the one thing needful. He will ſay, from the bottom of his heart, in the preſence of an all ſeeing God, "Lord, let we never have "my portion in this world only. The glory of a throne, "the moſt inexhauſtible mines of gold and ſilver, without "thy favor, I would not only deſpiſe, but abhor."

Whence ariſes this diſpoſition in the believer? From a conviction of the unſatisfying nature of all earthly enjoyments; from an inward perſuaſion of this truth, That "the world, in its beſt ſtate, is altogether vanity;" from a ſenſe of the infinite diſproportion between the poſſeſſion of the creature, and the favor of the Creator; but, above all, from a deep and abiding conviction of the precarioufneſs and uncertainty of all earthly things. However undeniable it is, that the faſhion of this world paſſeth away, few there are who live under the ſtrong and lively practical impreſſion of it. The deceived hearts of ſinners believe the contrary. How well are they deſcribed by the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. xlix. 11, 12, 13. "Their inward thought "is, that their houſes ſhall continue for ever, and their "dwelling-places to all generations; they call their lands "after their own names. Nevertheleſs, man being in "honor, abideth not: he is like the beaſts that pe-"riſh. This their way is their folly; yet their poſte-"rity approve of their ſayings!" One would think, nothing more ſhould be neceſſary to crucify the world, than to reflect upon the many deſcriptions given us in the word of God of its uncertain duration; Pſal. xxxvii. 35, 36. "I have ſeen the wicked in great power; and "ſpreading himſelf like a green bay-tree. Yet he paſſed "away, and lo, he was not; yea, I ſought him, but he "could not be found." If. xl. 6. "And the voice ſaid, "Cry. And he ſaid, What ſhall I cry? All fleſh is graſs, "and all the goodlineſs thereof is as the flower of the field." I ſhall only add our Lord's deſcription of the ſudden call of a wordly man to death and judgment; Luke xii. 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21. "And he ſpake a parable unto them, "ſaying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth "plentifully. And he thought within himſelf, ſaying, "What ſhall I do, becauſe I have no room where to be-"ſtow my fruits? And he ſaid, This will I do; I will

" pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will " I beſtow all my fruits, and my goods. And I will ſay " to my ſoul, Soul, thou haſt much goods laid up for many " years; take thine eaſe, eat, drink, and be merry. But " God ſaid unto him, Thou fool, this night thy ſoul ſhall " be required of thee; then whoſe ſhall thoſe things be " which thou haſt provided? So is he that layeth up trea- " ſure for himſelf, and is not rich towards God."

3. The world muſt be crucified, *as it pretends to be neceſſary to our felicity.* This is chiefly directed againſt thoſe who love the world to exceſs, though at the ſame time they at leaſt pretend to love God more. They ſeem to have choſen God as their ſupreme; but it does not appear, that they have choſen him as their ſufficient portion. The world ſtill bulks ſo much in their eye, that they know no happineſs or comfort of which it makes not a part. They ſee, or think they ſee, the inſufficiency of the world, without the favor of God, as a refuge when the world fails; but they can no more reſt ſatisfied in God without the world, than in the world without God. I have no doubt, you will be ſenſible there are many amongſt us in this condition: nay, I am afraid there will be not a few within themſelves ſecretly juſtifying this character and conduct. They will ſay, 'Is it poſſible to deny, that the 'world is neceſſary to us while we continue here? is it not 'ſo to you as well as to us? and therefore why ſhould it 'not be regarded in this light?'

To all ſuch I anſwer, The world, in a certain proportion, is indeed neceſſary to us; but this proportion is not to be aſcertained by us. It muſt be left to the diſpoſal of infinite wiſdom, without any conditions. When there is a divorce or ſeparation between the believer and the world, it is entire and complete, without reſerve or limitation. He gives up all as the object of carnal affection, that he may receive again, for a nobler purpoſe, that meaſure which ſeems neceſſary to the ſanctified will of God. He is juſt in the ſituation of a man who, having contracted obligations which he is unable to diſcharge, has ſurrendered his all into the hands of another; and has no further uſe of what was formerly his own, than as much, or as

long as the new propietor ſhall think fit. I know no image that more properly repreſents the condition of the believer; with this difference, that in human affairs the change is uſually for the worſe; but in ſpiritual things, the renunciation is an infinite advantage, and the ſeeming loſs an unſpeakable gain.

Think not, my brethren, that this is carrying matters to exceſs. It is what our Saviour expreſsly requires of all that would embrace his doctrine: Luke ix. 23. "And he "ſaid unto them all, If any man will come after me, let "him deny himſelf, and take up his croſs daily, and fol- "low me." It is indeed one of the hard ſayings of the goſpel. You have heard it ſometimes ſaid, that every Chriſtian muſt be a martyr in reſolution; and doubtleſs the world is not thoroughly crucified, unleſs our attachment to every worldly enjoyment, without exception, be ſo broken, that we are ready to reſign it whenever God, in his Providence, ſhall ſee fit to demand it. We have an excellent leſſon to this purpoſe, in the trial to which our Saviour put the young man in the goſpel, with a decent and regular profeſſion: Matth. xix. 21, 22. "Jeſus "ſaid unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and ſell that "thou haſt, and give it to the poor, and thou ſhalt have "treaſure in heaven: and come and follow me. But "when the young man heard that ſaying, he went away "ſorrowful; for he had great poſſeſſions." To crucify the world, then, is to count no worldly enjoyment whatever neceſſary, either to our preſent comfort, or everlaſting happineſs, but to put an abſolute and unſhaken confidence in the wiſdom and goodneſs of a reconciled God. This is excellently expreſſed by the prophet Habakkuk, chap. iii. 17, 18. "Although the fig-tree ſhall not bloſſom, neither "ſhall fruit be in the vines, the labor of the olives ſhall "fail, and the fields ſhall yield no meat, the flock ſhall be "cut off from the fold, and there ſhall be no herd in the "ſtalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the "God of my ſalvation."

4. In the laſt place, The world muſt be crucified, *as it is a ſeparate and independent good, without its due relation to God.* God himſelf alone is independent. All other

things ſtand in an inſeparable relation to him, and ſhould be uſed in ſubſerviency to his honor: "For of him, and "through him, and to him, are all things." Every rational creature, who continues in, or returns to his duty, diſcerns this relation, and maintains this ſubſerviency. It was the firſt idolatry and ſacrilege, to break the ties that join the Maker to his works, and love the creature for its own ſake. But he that is crucified to the world, will conſider every earthly enjoyment as the gift of God: he will confeſs the goodneſs of God in beſtowing it, and will obey the command of God in the uſe and application of it. That this is the duty of a Chriſtian, is plain from the general ſtrain of the holy ſcriptures; and particularly from this expreſs and poſitive declaration, 1 Cor. x. 31. "Whether "therefore ye eat or drink, or whatſoever ye do, do all to "the glory of God."

The world, then, as a ſeparate independent good, or as a mere gratification of carnal deſire, is to be crucified. It was not given us for ſo low a purpoſe as the indulgence of appetite, but for nobler ends. But perhaps it will be neceſſary to obſerve, that ſome of the myſtic writers have raiſed a variety of improper queſtions on this ſubject. Some have affirmed the unlawfulneſs of taſting any of the ſweetneſs of created enjoyments more than was barely neceſſary for ſubſiſtence. It is eaſy to ſee, that it muſt be very hard, in many ſuch caſes, to fix the bounds between neceſſity and convenience, uſe and pleaſure: hence the conſcience is involved in unſpeakable and endleſs perplexity. Upon this I would obſerve, that the general reference of all things, even common actions, to the glory of God, is ſufficiently and clearly eſtabliſhed upon the paſſage of ſcripture above mentioned. But in order to do this in the moſt profitable manner, ſome ſubordinate ends alſo muſt be conſidered: and therefore, not only what is neceſſary to health and comfort muſt be uſed with this view, but the enjoyment of many of the creatures may be allowed as the fruits of divine bounty, and tending to inſpire an habitual chearfulneſs and gratitude to God.

I ſhall conclude with giving you theſe two general rules to be obſerved in the enjoyment of outward mercies.

1. That we have greater reaſon to guard againſt ſins of exceſs and intemperance than of abſtinence. The firſt are unſpeakably more common and prevalent than the other: they always have been ſo, and are always likely to be ſo. If ſome few have gone into ſuperſtition, by extraordinary mortification, thouſands have been betrayed into ſin, and at laſt brought to perdition, by the charms of a ſenſual life.

2. If any are in danger of erring on the oppoſite ſide, the way to diſcover when we are going wrong, is to conſider, whether the mortification renders us more ſpiritual, and more active, or, by exceſs of ſcrupuloſity, we are conſuming our time, and neglecting our duty. The deceits of Satan are very ſubtle: he fills ſome perſons with ſo many doubts upon every particular, that they are like one who makes little progreſs in his journey, from continual uncertainty, and frequent ſtopping to enquire the way. It is certainly far better to carry on the general ends of God's glory, and point to this as our ultimate purpoſe, than every now and then to entangle and embarraſs ourſelves with queſtions of little moment.

Before proceeding to the ſecond general head, I ſhall finiſh this diſcourſe by a few obſervations for the improvement of what hath been already ſaid. And,

1. From what hath been ſaid upon this ſubject, you may learn the great *importance* of the duty; that it is the diſtinguiſhing character of a real Chriſtian, to be crucified to the world, and the world to him. Alas! how many deceive themſelves in this particular! How many ſatisfy themſelves with a name to live, when they are dead; with a form of godlineſs, while they deny the power thereof! How many, with a decent and regular outward profeſſion, are yet wholly devoted to the world! Their meditation dwells upon it; their affections centre in it; their care is beſtowed upon it; and their delights entirely flow from it. Let it be conſidered, that there is nothing more contrary to true religion. The world, or created good, is the great competitor with God for the heart. All the honor and eſteem that is given to it is taken from God. All the ſervice and obedience that is beſtowed upon it is refu-

ſed to God. Call to mind ſome of the paſſages of ſcripture referred to in the preceding diſcourſe; particularly the following: 1 John ii. 15. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love "the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

My dear brethren, there are many who would look with contempt or indignation on thoſe who are guilty of particular ſcandalous and diſgraceful ſins, for example, on a profane ſwearer, drunkard, or unclean perſon, while yet they themſelves are as much wedded to the world, and have as great an inward averſion at the practice of piety, and the power of the ſpiritual life, as any of them all. Other ſins are but the body or the members: worldlineſs is the ſoul and ſpirit of irreligion. Other ſins are but the acts or expreſſions, worldlineſs the inward principle that gives them life.

How important a part this is of the Chriſtian character, will plainly appear from theſe two conſiderations: 1. Worldlineſs may be itſelf the principle which reſtrains men from many other ſins. A deſire of reputation, a delight in the eſteem of others, is often the cauſe of outward decency; nay, it is not ſeldom the cauſe of apparent zeal and eminent hypocriſy. 2. There may be as great a degree of worldlineſs with as without a profeſſion of piety. Men may retain a form of godlineſs chiefly to ſet themſelves free from the reproofs of conſcience, that their preſent enjoyments may have the higher reliſh. Nay, I cannot help obſerving, that though covetouſneſs is one of the groſs ſins mentioned in ſcripture, as entirely ſubverſive of religion, there is ſcarcely any ſin that can be carried to ſuch a degree, without caſting off the profeſſion of it. Hence it plainly appears how important a part of the character of a real Chriſtian it is to be crucified to the world. Without this the ſoundeſt principles, and the ſtricteſt profeſſion, will avail nothing; for they that are "Chriſt's, "have crucified the fleſh, with its affections and luſts."

2. From what hath been ſaid you may ſee, not only the importance, but the great *extent* of the duty. The world itſelf, and all that is therein, in the ſenſe formerly explained, muſt be crucified. That you may, in

ſome meaſure, conceive the extent of this, conſider the common diviſion of worldly enjoyments, viz. riches, honors and pleaſures. All theſe, without exception, and all theſe equally, muſt be denied by the Chriſtian. You ſhall often ſee, that the covetous man will deſpiſe and hate the prodigal, and even expreſs the greateſt zeal againſt riot, and extravagance of every kind. The ſenſualiſt, on the other hand, deſpiſes the miſer, as glued to the world, and a ſlave to the moſt ſordid of all human paſſions. And the ambitious man, eager in the purſuit of honor and dignity, vainly conceives himſelf ſuperior to both. But they are all equally oppoſite to, and inconſiſtent with the ſpirit of the goſpel. If your ſupreme delight, if your portion and happineſs is here, it is of little conſequence whether your hearts are ſet upon "the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the "eye, or the pride of life." It is with the ſoul as with the body: there are many different diſeaſes taking place in different parts, and ſhewing themſelves by different ſymptoms, but which will equally end in death as their effect.

3. You may hence learn the *difficulty* of the duty; to be crucified to the world, and yet to live in the world; to be crucified to the world, and yet to poſſeſs the world; to be crucified to the world, and yet to have a great part of our thoughts and love neceſſarily employed about the world. The temptation is ever preſent, and, through the corruption and treachery of our own hearts, fatally ſtrong. Ought we not hence to infer the abſolute neceſſity of continual vigilance, and continual prayer? continual vigilance in our duty, and jealous of every temptation that may be in danger of diverting us from it? continual prayer to the Father of lights, in the name of Chriſt, for ſupernatural ſtrength? Every exerciſed Chriſtian knows from experience the danger of the world as an enemy, and how hard it is to keep ſuch clear views of the things of eternity, as to be preſerved from an undue and ſinful attachment to the things of time. The world is dangerous even to thoſe who maintain an habitual jealouſy of it, and hold it as an enemy: how much more muſt it be ruinous and fatal to thoſe who love and proſecute it as the object of their chief deſire:

4. I ſhall now conclude, by improving this ſubject for the purpoſe of ſelf-examination. And ſurely no ſerious hearer will be backward to bring himſelf to the trial. My beloved hearers I ſpeak to all of every rank, high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, who profeſs to bear the name of Chriſtians: Are you, or are you not, crucified to the world, and the world to you? All real believers are ſo. If you are not, your riches or your poverty, your honor or your ſhame, your regular behavior, or even your zeal for public duties, will avail you nothing in the day of Chriſt's appearance. I am ſenſible, that the deciſion of the queſtion, Whether you are, or are not, crucified to the world? may often be attended with no little difficulty. I will therefore, as far as I am able, endeavor to aſſiſt you in the trial. For which purpoſe, I beg your attention to the following obſervations.

1. You are crucified to the world, if you do not habitually allow your thoughts to dwell upon it, and your deſires to run out after it. The croſs was an abhorred object, which no body could look upon with delight. Worldlineſs is often as much diſcovered by our deſires after what we have not, as by the uſe or employment of what we have. There are many whoſe great delight ſeems to ariſe from the fond expectations they entertain of worldly happineſs to come: nay, there are many who are ſo ſlothful as not to purſue the world, and yet feed themſelves with the very imagination of it. Their thoughts, and even their language, conſtantly runs upon idle fancies, and romantic ſuppoſitions of the happineſs they ſhould enjoy, were they in ſuch or ſuch a ſtate. Now, my brethren, he that is crucified to the world will make conſcience of reſtraining theſe irregular deſires; and, from a deep conviction of the vanity of the world, will find little pleaſure in the contemplation of it.

2. Your begin crucified to the world will appear in the moderation of your delight and complacency in what you poſſeſs of it. You will not, if I may ſpeak ſo, give yourſelves up to it, but will always qualify the enjoyment of it by a reflection upon its vanity in itſelf, and its ſhort duration as to any connection we ſhall have with it. We

are ready to pity the weakneſs of children, when we ſee them apply themſelves with ſo much eagerneſs to trifles, and ſo greatly delighted with their amuſements and enjoyments. A parent, looking on them when hotly engaged at play, will be at once pleaſed to ſee them happy, and at the ſame time filled with a tender commiſeration of their want of reflection. Something of the ſame view one crucified to the world has of all earthly enjoyments. Many a grown perſon will ſmile at the play of children, while he himſelf is perhaps as eagerly engaged in the ſchemes of ambition, in political ſtruggles, and conteſts for power; which are often as great trifles as the play-things of children, only that they are the play-things of men.

3. You are crucified to the world if you have low hopes and expectations from it. It is hope that ſtirs us up chiefly to action in all our purſuits. And ſo long as we entertain high thoughts of what the world will afford us in ſome after-ſeaſon, we are not crucified to it. There is a common proverbial ſaying, "If it were not for hope, the "heart would break:" juſt ſo, when our hopes from the world are deſtroyed, the heart of the old man is broken. We are exceeding ready to think, that were ſuch or ſuch a difficulty or uneaſineſs removed, could we obtain ſuch or ſuch an advantage in view, we would be happy. But there is always a deception at bottom. We vainly think, that happineſs ariſes from the creature; but he that is crucified to the world judges, by paſt experience, that it hath little comfort to give; and therefore he will place but little dependence upon it.

4. He is crucified to the world who hath truly ſubdued all invidious diſpoſitions towards the poſſeſſion of it. There are many who ſeem to have little comfort from their own enjoyments; but there is reaſon to fear, that it ariſes not ſo much from ſelf-denial, as from diſcontent. The world may be ſaid to be crucified to them, but they are not crucified to the world. It is by this that worldlineſs expreſſes itſelf chiefly in the lower ranks of life. Thoſe who are obliged to live moderately and hardly, from mere penury, often ſhew, by their carriage and language, that they have as much ſenſuality in their hearts, as thoſe who in-

dulge their irregular desires to the greatest excess. But he that is crucified to the world, not only sees all its pomp and splendor in others without repining, but will often bestow a thought of compassion upon the great, for the ensnaring circumstances in which they are placed with regard to their souls. And surely they are of all others most to be pitied. May the Lord, in mercy, convince them of their danger; and, in the mean time, preserve his own people from being led astray by their influence and example.

THE WORLD CRUCIFIED BY THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

A

SERMON.

GALATIANS vi. 14. laſt clauſe.

——By whom the world is Crucified to me, and I unto the World.

I NOW proceed to the ſecond thing propoſed, which was, To ſhow the influence of the croſs of Chriſt in crucifying the world. This, my brethren, deſerves your moſt ſerious attention, as pointing you to the great and vital principle of the Chriſtian's ſanctification, the true and only ſource of ſpiritual comfort and peace. The croſs of Chriſt is always conſidered in the apoſtolic writings as an object of the higheſt dignity and merit; and the believer is there taught to ſpeak of it in expreſſions of the warmeſt attachment and regard. Witneſs the words of the text itſelf, in the preceding clauſe: "God forbid that I ſhould "glory ſave in the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt." We may perhaps be eaſily induced, in a time of external quietneſs and peace, to adopt this ſentiment as an opinion, or to uſe it as a form; but happy, and only happy, thoſe in whom it dwells as an ever preſent truth, and operates as a daily governing principle!

Taking the ſubject in great latitude, I might obſerve, that the croſs of Chriſt being the price paid for the bleſſings of ſalvation in general, every illuminating diſcovery in the mind, and every gracious affection in the heart,

which are the work of the divine Spirit, may be juſtly aſcribed to it. But I propoſe, at this time, to conſider it ſingly as an object of faith, and to ſhew how the firm perſuaſion and frequent recollection of this great truth tends to crucify the world to us, and us to the world; the rather, that we find elſewhere our victory over the world aſcribed to faith, and this faith particularly terminating on the Son of God: 1 John v. 4, 5. "For whatſoever is born of God, "overcometh the world; and this is the victory that "overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that "overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jeſus "is the Son of God?" For the further illuſtration of this ſubject, then, let us obſerve,

1. That the croſs of Chriſt crucifies the world, as it gives us an immediate and ſtriking view of the mortality of our nature, as well as the original and general cauſe of this mortality. The vanity of created things is in nothing more manifeſt, than in their precarious nature, particularly our own tendency to the duſt, by which all earthly relations ſhall be ſpeedily and entirely diſſolved. In this view, indeed, you may ſay, that the death of any other perſon, ſickneſs, and all its attending ſymptoms, or a funeral, with its mournful ſolemnities, tends to crucify the world: and moſt certainly they do. But there is ſomething ſtill more in the croſs of Chriſt. There we ſee, not only the death of our nature, but the death of the Son of God in our room. There we are carried back to a view of the great cauſe of the univerſal reign of the king of terrors, ſin. Sin firſt brought death into the world; and this made it neceſſary that Chriſt "ſhould taſte of death "for every man," that we might be reſtored to ſpiritual life. Mortality, therefore, is written in the moſt legible characters on the croſs of Chriſt. Nay, the curſe of creation itſelf is written upon the croſs of Chriſt. We cannot look upon it, therefore, in a ſerious manner, without being deeply affected with the doom which we ourſelves have ſtill to undergo: "Duſt thou art, and to duſt thou ſhalt "return." It is impoſſible to avoid knowing that we muſt die; but thoſe only diſcover the moment of this truth, who ſee its procuring cauſe. Thoſe only have juſt and abiding

impreſſions of the ſpeedy approach of natural death, who are filled with concern for their own deliverance from the power of the ſecond death.

2. The croſs of Chriſt crucifies the world to a believer, as it ſhews him how little he deſerves at the hand of God. Believers on the croſs of Chriſt ſee him ſtanding in their room, and bearing the wrath of an offended God, which was their due. When this is not only profeſſed with the mouth, but received into the heart, it gives a deep conviction of the evil of ſin, and lays the ſinner proſtrate in humility and ſelf-abaſement. Muſt not this greatly weaken and mortify all worldly affection, which takes its riſe from pride and ſelf-ſufficiency? It is, if I may ſpeak ſo, a ſort of claim and demand upon Providence, as if ſomething were due to us. Worldly perſons, in proſperity, not only cleave to the world as their portion, but may be ſaid to aſſert their title to it as their property. The ſame inward diſpoſition may be diſcovered by their carriage in the oppoſite ſtate. When their ſchemes are broken, and their hopes blaſted, by repeated diſappointments, or when their poſſeſſions are taken from them by unexpected ſtrokes, they reſiſt and rebel with impatience and indignation, as if ſome perſon had done them wrong.

But when men are ſenſible that they deſerve nothing at the hand of God, this mortifies their earthly deſires, and puts their complaints to ſilence. See how Job expreſſes himſelf after all his calamities, as ſenſible that he had loſt nothing of his own, chap. i. 21. "Naked came I out of "my mother's womb, and naked ſhall I return thither: "the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; bleſſed "be the name of the Lord." Let me ſpeak of this, my brethren, as a gracious diſpoſition, which, alas! is too often but weak, yet ſurely hath place in the heart of every child of God. Let me ſuppoſe him convinced, that he is unworthy of the leaſt of all God's mercies; will he not keep his poſſeſſions the more looſely, and will he not quit his hold the more eaſily? But where ſhall we learn real ſelf-abaſement ſo well as from the croſs? where ſhall we learn how little we deſerve that is good, ſo well as in that place which ſhews we have indeed deſerved every thing

that is evil? where ſhall we learn to make moderate demands of created mercies, but where we ſee, that not only the creature, but life itſelf, was forfeited by our guilt? Let me ſuppoſe a condemned criminal carried, with many others, to a ſcaffold, there receiving a pardon, and witneſſing, in the execution of others, what was the ſentence of the law upon himſelf; will he, at this inſtant, think you, be impatient or thankful? Will he be jealous of the honor or reſpect paid to him? will he quarrel about the dignity or convenience of the place aſſigned to him? No ſurely. Loſt in the conſideration of the fate he has eſcaped, and the favor he has received, he will pay little regard to matters of ſmall comparative importance. Juſt ſo the Chriſtian, placed by faith at the foot of the croſs, deeply moved by a diſcovery of the wrath of God, which he had deſerved to ſuffer to eternity, and taking an immediate view of what his Redeemer ſuffered to deliver him from it, will be little thoughtful of the world, or any of its enjoyments.

3. The croſs of Chriſt crucifies the world, by reverſing all worldly maxims, and ſhewing of how light eſtimation worldly greatneſs is in the ſight of God. So long as worldly maxims prevail, and worldly greatneſs is in high eſteem, the croſs of Chriſt is a deſpiſed object. But ſo ſoon as this object acquires bulk and value in the believer's eye, by being taken for what it really is, the world is diſgraced in its turn. It pleaſed God, in his infinite wiſdom, for the ſalvation of ſinners, to ſend his own Son into the world, in the human nature: and as it was in itſelf a deep ſtep of humiliation, for the Son of God to be found in faſhion as a man; ſo, even in this aſſumed nature, he was attended with every circumſtance of meanneſs and baſeneſs. No retinue of illuſtrious miniſters to ſerve him; no ſplendid or elegant apartment to receive him; but born of a mean woman, brought forth in a ſtable, and laid in a manger. Memorable and inſtructive hiſtory indeed! which ſhall never be forgotten where the goſpel is preached, to the end of time.

Remember, my beloved hearers, though divine ſweetneſs and benignity adorned his carriage, though divine

power and energy attended his miniſtrations; yet poverty, ſlander, and contempt were his continual portion; ſo that he could ſay, in the language of the prophet, "Reproach hath broken my heart:" and again, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have neſts; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Some of the ancients have repreſented the Saviour as of extraordinary beauty of countenance and comelineſs of form, founded perhaps on a literal interpretation of that expreſſion in the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. xlv. 2. "Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips; therefore God hath bleſſed thee forever." Without being poſitive, I ſhall only ſay, that this does not correſpond much with the other circumſtances of his incarnation. And indeed ſome have ſuppoſed directly the contrary, founding their opinion upon the language of the prophet Iſaiah, chap. lii. 14. "As many were aſtonied at thee; (his viſage was ſo marred more than any man, and his form more than the ſons of men);" as alſo, chap. liii. 2. "For he ſhall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comelineſs: and when we ſhall ſee him, there is no beauty that we ſhould deſire him." Whatever be in this, it is beyond all queſtion, that the whole courſe of his life, and particularly the remarkable concluſion of it, was one continued tract of ſuffering and mortification.

Does not this, Chriſtians, bring a reproach upon worldly greatneſs, and ſtain the pride of all human glory? Does it not ſhow how little it is eſteemed of God, and how little it is an evidence of his acceptance or approbation? What an influence muſt this have upon the believer to crucify the world? How muſt it endear to him a mean and deſpiſed, and reconcile him to a ſuffering ſtate? With what propriety does the Chriſtian, when he is baptized in the name of Chriſt, renounce the world, its pomps, and its pleaſures? Does not a ſingle reflection on the deſpiſed ſtate of our Redeemer, in the days of his fleſh, make you patient under contempt, and extinguiſh the deſire of applauſe? Have you any remaining uneaſineſs at ſeeing others getting before you in the career of ambition, over-

topping you with titles, eclipſing you with ſplendor? Do you not now ſee the propriety of the account given of the carriage of the apoſtles, when the world and they were at variance, Acts v. 41. "And they departed from the pre-"ſence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted "worthy to ſuffer ſhame for his name." Whether do you now envy the conqueror or the ſufferer, the prince or the martyr? Whereever there is a real Chriſtian raiſed to opulence by the will of God, or ſurrounded with enſigns of dignity and honor, will not this conſideration fill him with deep humility and ſelf-denial, and a holy jealouſy, leſt he ſhould abuſe his influence, or miſapply his talents? The higheſt honor of real ability is uſefulneſs, the brighteſt ornament of worldly greatneſs is ſelf-abaſement. All this ſhews, in the cleareſt manner, how the croſs of Chriſt crucifies the world, by reverſing every worldly maxim, and giving a new turn to the principles of honor and of ſhame. This leads me to obſerve,

4. In the *laſt* place, That the croſs of Chriſt crucifies the world, by putting a quite different object of deſire and affection in its room. Our limited powers can attend but to few things at once; and therefore, when any one acquires an intereſt in our affections, it muſt comparatively weaken or deſtroy the intereſt of others, eſpecially thoſe of an oppoſite or independent kind. Make a new bed to a river, and turn its ſtream in that direction, and it will immediately dry up its former channel. Now, the croſs of Chriſt preſents to us an object of infinite importance, peace and reconciliation with God here, and everlaſting happineſs in his preſence hereafter. Can any worldly object be laid in the balance with theſe? What eſteem or attention can it merit in compariſon with theſe?

Whether we conſider the end or the means of ſalvation, the croſs of Chriſt tends to ſupplant the world, by improving our views of and increaſing our affection to both. It ſhews the infinite importance of eternity and its conſequences: and what more proper to deliver us from an undue attachment to the things of time? Eternity, by its greatneſs, makes time itſelf to ſhrink into a point, and annihilates all thoſe little temporary diſtinctions on which

worldly affection entirely depends. What doth it ſignify to him that views eternity aright, whether he be for a few years in health or ſickneſs, riches or poverty, on a throne or in a cottage? How immenſe, according to human meaſure, appears the difference between the poſſeſſions of ſome perſons in the world and others! But of all the generations before us, who have now fallen aſleep, how equal is the condition in this reſpect! The monarch and the ſlave, when laid in the duſt, fill nearly the ſame ſpace.

If we conſider the means of religion, the croſs of Chriſt applied by a convinced ſinner, opens to him ſuch a proſpect of the infinite unmerited love of God, and of this aſtoniſhing expreſſion of it, the death of his Son, as at once captivates the heart, and, if I may ſpeak ſo, occupies ſo much room there, as leaves but little for any other object. How ſoon did it open the heart of the publican Zaccheus, and expel the ſpirit of covetouſneſs and extortion! Luke xix. 8. "And Zaccheus ſtood, and ſaid unto the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor: "and if I have taken any thing from any man by falſe ac- "cuſation, I reſtore him fourfold." In how ſtrong a manner does the apoſtle Paul expreſs his comparative eſteem of the croſs of Chriſt! Phil. iii. 7, 8. "But what things "were gain to me, thoſe I counted loſs for Chriſt. Yea, "doubtleſs, and I count all things but loſs, for the excel- "lency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord: for "whom I have ſuffered the loſs of all things, and do count "them but dung that I may win Chriſt." This is the very ſame diſpoſition with that which he expreſſes in the text; and it differs no otherwiſe from that of every Chriſtian, than that it is probable he had a particular view to his calling as a miniſter and an apoſtle. Captivated with a ſenſe of his Redeemer's love, filled with a view of the glory of his croſs, and devoted to his ſervice in the miniſtry of the goſpel, he renounces all worldly proſpects, and ſets at defiance every thing that might diſtract his attention, or divide his care: "God forbid that I ſhould glory "ſave in the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by whom the "world is crucified to me, and I unto the world."

III. I proceed now, in the *last* place, to make ſome practical improvement of what hath been ſaid. And as, upon this intereſting ſubject, it is neceſſary that I ſhould ſpeak with all ſerioufneſs and fidelity, as well as at ſome length, ſo I moſt earneſtly beſeech you, as you regard your preſent peace, your comfort in the hour of death, and the everlaſting happineſs of your ſouls, to hear it with attention and application.

1. I muſt take the opportunity to reprove the ſin and ſhew the danger of thoſe who are wedded to the world. I would willingly interrupt that comfort, and break that peace, which will end in perdition. For this purpoſe, and in order to make the reproof more diſtinct and effectual, I ſhall direct it ſeparately to the three following characters.

(1) To thoſe whoſe love of the world is ſo great, that they ſcruple not to uſe, occaſionally at leaſt, if not habitually, ſinful means of getting or keeping poſſeſſion of it. This indeed opens to us a very extenſive field: it leads us to conſider all the particular ſins which an inordinate love of the world may produce, or increaſe. It is melancholy, my brethren, to think what contention and variance, nay what hatred and violence, even amongſt the neareſt relations, the diviſion of worldly property occaſions. What envy and grudging, what ſlander and evil-ſpeaking, between perſon and perſon, between family and family! And even in the ordinary way of traffick, what art and diſſimulation, what falſehood and equivocation, are to be found between man and man! But what I have chiefly in view is, to ſpeak a few words to thoſe who, in order to promote their worldly ends, have been guilty of direct diſhoneſty, and known injuſtice. How many are there whoſe conſciences, if they would be faithful, muſt tell them, that they are now in poſſeſſion of the fruits of unlawful gain! Oh! the blindneſs of thoſe deluded unhappy ſouls! if an inordinate love of the world, however honeſtly acquired, is not only ſinful, but deſtructive of your eternal intereſt; what ſhall become of thoſe who have trodden under foot the laws both of God and man, in order to obtain it? If an exceſſive love of the moſt lawful enjoy-

ments, father and mother, wife and children, is inconsistent with salvation; what must become of those who have loved and followed the gain of unrighteousness? what must become of those who, to clothe their backs, or feed their bellies, or gratify their pride, have not scrupled to be guilty of breach of trust, or breach of promise, of open oppression, or secret fraud? If every poor worldling must stand trembling upon the brink of eternity, when he sees all his painted shadows ready to sink into everlasting darkness; what horror must seize upon the dying sinner, who is just about to surrender all his dear possessions to another, while his conscience is loaded with the guilt of fraud or perjury? and this he cannot leave behind him. Oh! my dear brethren, tremble at the thoughts of dishonest gain; loathe it; return it; shake your hands clear of it. It will imbitter your enjoyments: it will be a moth in your substance, a fire in your consciences on earth, and a hell to your souls after the earth itself, and all that is therein, is burnt up.

(2) I would address this reproof to those who are apparently more decent and regular, whom a sense of honor, or a desire of approbation of their fellow-creatures, preserves from grosser crimes, or whom perhaps natural conscience persuades to take up the outward and ordinary part of religion as a form. Many such persons are wedded to the world. Their thoughts are there, their delights are there, their hopes and expectations are only there. Bear with me, my brethren, in pressing this a little; and do not turn away, and refuse the charge. Worldliness is the reigning sin, and will be the eternal ruin of many persons of better rank, to whose conversation, a more liberal way of thinking, and a sense of decency, may give even an amiable appearance. I would beseech the attention of such persons to what shall now be said; not from any disrespect to their state and situation in civil life, God knoweth! but from fidelity to their souls. Consider, I pray you, the extreme danger of worldliness of mind. It is itself a great and aggravated sin, and is the parent of many others. It is a sin, where it hath dominion, inconsistent with salvation. Hear the words of the Lord

Jeſus: "He that loveth father or mother, ſon or daugh-
"ter, more than me, is not worthy of me." There are ſome ſorts of ſinners on whom you would look with contempt or abhorrence; but you may poſſibly deceive yourſelves. The ſtrict and regular, but covetous Phariſees, little thought that the publicans and ſinners were nearer the kingdom of heaven than themſelves. I do not ſay this to extenuate ſin of any kind, but to guard you againſt the power of deluſion and ſelf-deceit. I know that none but the Searcher of hearts can make a certain judgment of the degree of depravity in different characters; and therefore I do not ſo much urge the compariſon for your condemnation, as caution you againſt relying upon it for your juſtification. The unalterable rule, taken both from the law and the goſpel, is this: Which of the two has the ſupreme commanding intereſt in you affections, God or the world? As an eminent author expreſſes it, 'He is the moſt wicked man that hath in his heart the ſtrongeſt intereſt that 'is oppoſite to God; and all that is not ſubordinate to 'him is oppoſite to him: I ſay again, the greater creature-intereſt, the more ſinful the ſtate. Though you be 'neither thieves, nor extortioners, nor adulterers, your 'ſin may be as deep rooted, and the intereſt of the world 'as predominant, or more ſo, in you, than in ſome of 'them. Alas! Sirs, the abſtaining from ſome of theſe 'ſins, and living like civil and orderly perſons, though it 'is ſo far commendable, is not enough. If the world be 'not crucified to you, and you to it, ſuch abſtinence will 'but hide your ſin and miſery, and hinder your ſhame and 'repentance, but not prevent your eternal damnation. 'Your lands and your houſes, and hopeful poſterity, and 'other proviſion you have made for the fleſh, may have 'more of your hearts, than the world hath of the heart of 'a poor wretch who never had ſo much to idolize.' Upon the whole, my brethren, let me only put you in mind, this exhortation is not leſs neceſſary to you than the like cautions were to the hearers of Chriſt in the days of his fleſh, whom he warns againſt the dangers of an affluent ſtate: Luke viii. 14. "And that which fell among thorns,
"are they, which when they have heard, go forth, and

" are choked with cares, and riches, and pleaſures of this " life, and bring no fruit to perfection." Matt. xix. 23, 24. " Then ſaid Jeſus unto his diſciples, Verily I ſay un- " to you, that a rich man ſhall hardly enter into the king- " dom of heaven. And again I ſay unto you, It is eaſier " for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for " a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." It ought to give you great conſolation, that he adds, v. 26. " With " men this is impoſſible, but with God all things are poſ- " ſible."

(3) I would addreſs this exhortation to the children of God, in whom I know the world is crucified upon the whole; yet, alas! it ſtill retains ſuch a degree of intereſt as is provoking to God, offenſive to others, and hurtful to their own peace. In what glaſs can you ſee more clearly the weakneſs of faith, and every other gracious diſpoſition, than in their little influence in reſtraining the motions of carnal affection? Had the great objects of faith and hope that place in our hearts, and that entire dominion in our affections, which they ought to have; would there be ſo much conformity to worldly maxims and practices, as is daily to be ſeen? would there be ſo much emulation in all the outward expreſſions of pride and gaiety, in dreſs, furniture, and equipage? would there be ſo much deſire of the increaſe of wealth and greatneſs? would there be ſo much envy of thoſe who are ſucceſsful, and go beyond us? Shall I tell you how a Chriſtian ſhould look upon thoſe who proſper remarkably in their worldly affairs? If they are truly pious, he ſhould rejoice with them; for here is ſo much wealth and influence put into ſuch hands as will employ them in doing good. On the other hand, if they are wicked, he ſhould ſincerely pity them, as immerſed in the moſt dangerous temptations. If we were thoroughly dead to the world, and the world to us, would the loſs of wealth or reputation wound us ſo deeply as they generally do? would the malice or ſlanders of others make ſo ſenſible an impreſſion? It ſhould be pitied, as it is their ſin; but it may eaſily be deſpiſed, as it is our danger. Try this by the condition and conduct of the oppoſite character. A wicked man is dead to God

and ſpiritual things. What then, does he value the loſs of any thing of that nature? Tell him, that he hath loſt ſuch or ſuch an opportunity of communion with God, in his worſhip in public, or in family; that he hath loſt an opportunity of excellent inſtruction, in a ſermon or diſcourſe; with what manifeſt contempt will he receive the information, and ſmile at your weakneſs and credulity in ſhewing any attachment to ſuch things! Were we crucified to the world as we ought, would there be ſo much impatience under the hand of God in poverty, ſickneſs, the loſs of relations, or calamities of any kind? The lopping off a limb or member that is dead, gives little or no uneaſineſs: it is the life that remains which occaſions the pain of ſeparation. If the world ſat looſe upon us, its removal would ſcarcely be felt; but we muſt needs ſuffer at the very heart when any thing is withdrawn that hath its hold there. Let me therefore beſeech you, in this, to confeſs your ſin, to be humbled for it, and to pray, that you may be daily more and more delivered from it.

2. I ſhall improve this ſubject for pointing out the uſe of affliction, and the ground of your conſolation under it. This world at beſt is but a ſcene of ſorrow; and we then reap moſt comfort from it when we are ſenſible that it is ſo. The very purpoſe of affliction is, to ſhew us the vanity and uncertainty of all created comforts, and deliver us from an exceſſive attachment to them. It is much more difficult to crucify a ſmiling than a frowning world. It is not eaſy to hate it in its lovelieſt form, or, if I may uſe ſuch an expreſſion, to ſpeak harſhly to it when it is ſpeaking kindly to us? But in the time of affliction, when we are obliged to confeſs its variety, is it not reaſonable to expect, that our affection for it it will be abated? I have ſaid, that this ſeems the natural effect of ſuffering; becauſe it is the leſſon evidently carried in it. And accordingly the prophet Iſaiah ſays, chap. xxvi. 9. "For when thy "judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world "will learn righteouſneſs." I am ſenſible, however, that the reception which affliction meets with, and the effects which it produces, are very different in different perſons. It makes the worldly man curſe his idol in the rage of de-

ſpair; and it makes the child of God abhor the idolatry, and dwell with complacency on his unchangeable portion.

Conſider this, I beſeech you, my brethren; for you are all liable to the ſtroke of affliction, young and old, rich and poor, holy and unholy. It is indeed lamentable to ſee the fretful impatience of thoſe to whom the world is blaſted from without, but the love of the world, in all its ſtrength, ſtill ſubſiſting within. They have no ſource of conſolation in themſelves; and nothing comfortable can be ſpoken to them by others in a manner conſiſtent with truth and duty. To deal faithfully with them, we muſt do our utmoſt to add the bitterneſs of repentance to their other ſufferings; and this the cruel kindneſs of ſurrounding relations will ſeldom permit to be done. In the caſe of dying perſons, in particular, with what concern have I heard friends and phyſicians telling the groſſeſt falſhoods, in order to keep off, for a few moments, the apprehenſion of what they knew muſt immediately and certainly take place, and be the more terrible for the ſurpriſe!

On the other hand, it is comfortable to reflect, that the ſanctifying influence of afflictions is no leſs the language of experience than of ſcripture. Many have borne their teſtimony, and ſet their ſeal to it. Some have been ſo effectually mortified to pride and vanity, by the injuries or the ſlanders of others, that they have even felt conſolation in the reproach itſelf. But in a particular manner, I have been often pleaſed with young perſons to whom the world, and all their expectations from it, have been crucified by early affliction, expreſſing themſelves, not merely with ſubmiſſion, but with ſerenity and thankfulneſs. Bear with me in mentioning a real inſtance, known to myſelf, of a young man, who had been long confined with a diſeaſed member, and had a near and certain proſpect of his diſſolution. When, at the deſire of ſome perſon preſent, his loathſome ſore was uncovered, he expreſſed himſelf, to the beſt of my remembrance, in theſe very words: 'There it is; and a precious treaſure it has been to me! 'It ſaved me from the folly and vanity of youth; it made 'me cleave to God as my only portion, and eternal glory,

" as my only hope; and I think it has now brought me " very near to my Father's houſe." Now, what a ſpring of conſolation is here! Our duty, our buſineſs, our intereſt is, to crucify the world, and to be crucified to it. May we not, then, with the utmoſt gratitude, as well as patience, receive the appointments of that God who has promiſed, not only to deliver us from all our ſufferings in due time, not only to make up and recompenſe our loſſes with ſomething better, of a different kind, but has aſſured us, that theſe very ſufferings and loſſes, as their immediate effect, ſhall crucify ſin, and further our meetneſs for his own preſence?

3. Let me improve this ſubject by earneſtly exhorting you to endeavor to acquire more and more of the temper and ſtate of mind expreſſed by the holy apoſtle, in the text, " By whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the " world." Be perſuaded, my beloved hearers, to look upon all created things with the eye of faith. Remember their relation to God. He is their Maker and yours; and they muſt not be loved or ſerved but in ſubordination to his glory. Do not place your chief happineſs in them; do not eſteem them too highly; do not love them immoderately; do not proſecute them two violently. Place your chief happineſs in the favor of God, in communion with him on earth, and the well-grounded hope of the perpetual enjoyment of him in heaven; and let your regard to earthly things be no other, nor greater, than is ſuited to this end. That I may preſs this reſolution upon you, allow me to propoſe the three following conſiderations.

(1) Conſider the unſatisfying nature of all earthly enjoyments. They do not at all carry in them that ſweetneſs and excellence which worldly men ſuppoſe. Sin has drawn a miſt of deluſion over the minds of men. The inflamed and diſordered appetites of our corrupted nature always promiſe themſelves, in worldly poſſeſſions, a ſatisfaction infinitely greater than they are able to afford. We have this from the confeſſion of many who have made the experiment with every poſſible advantage. The book of Eccleſiaſtes is an admirable and animated deſcription of the vanity of human enjoyments. Solomon ſeems to

have been raiſed up in providence, for this among other ends, that he might leave behind him an account of the vanity of earthly greatneſs. And this is the title that he hath left written upon all that the world can give: Eccleſ. i. 2. "Vanity of vanities, ſaith the preacher, vanity of "vanities, all is vanity." Power and wealth, dignity and fame, variety of pleaſures, nay knowledge itſelf, as a ſource of preſent comfort, he affirms the vanity of them all: Eccleſ. ii. 11. "Then I looked on all the works that "my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had la- "bored to do: and behold, all was vanity and vexation "of ſpirit, and there was no profit under the ſun." And towards the cloſe of the ſame book, ch. xii. 12. he ſays, "And further, by theſe, my ſon, be admoniſhed: of "making many books there is no end, and much ſtudy "is a wearineſs of the fleſh."

Have there not been innumerable examples of the ſame teſtimony in every age and country? And what ſays your own experience? or your obſervation of others? Do men indeed riſe in comfort and ſatisfaction, in proportion as they riſe in ſtation or opulence? On the contrary, do they not rather commonly increaſe in anxiety and diſ- content? Do you indeed think, that thoſe who appear in gilded equipages have always on that account the moſt joyful hearts? Alas! there cannot be a greater miſtake. Could you ſee what paſſes within, there would appear un- governed paſſions, ungratified deſires, and diſappointed hopes; and could you enter their houſes, you would find wearineſs and impatience, family-diſtreſs, family-diſorders, and family-quarrels. It has been an old, and it is a moſt juſt obſervation, particularly upon avarice, That the deſire ſtill grows with the poſſeſſion. It is the ſame with every other ſinful paſſion. Indulgence does not gratify ſo much as it inflames them. Let a man climb ever ſo high on the ladder of ambition, he ſees ſtill others before him; and emulation and envy are as ſtrong, or ſtronger, between thoſe who ſtand on the adjoining ſteps at the top as at the bottom. There is one particular remark, that ſerves at once to ſhow the vanity of the world, and the ſinfulneſs of human nature: The greater variety of the worldly com-

forts any perſon poſſeſſes, he is not the more, but the leſs content, under the want of any one. The more and the longer any perſon hath been accuſtomed to obſequiouſneſs or flattery, he is the more impatient of the leaſt contradiction. The more abundant and univerſal reſpect that has been paid to any perſon, he is the more deeply wounded by neglect or contempt; as Haman, notwithſtanding all his greatneſs, was quite unſatisfied while there remained one poor man in the king's gate who would not do him reverence. Take but one example more. If a man hath great and extenſive poſſeſſions, and is without children, he is but the more diſtreſſed to think, that ſo noble an eſtate and family ſhould be without an heir, and will often envy the families of the poor, as if it were hard meaſure, that he who had ſo many temporal mercies ſhould not have all. Upon the whole, you may ſee, that there is a double vanity in the preſent ſtate. Created comforts are unſatisfying on the one hand, and human deſires are inſatiable on the other.

(2) Conſider the uncertainty of all earthly enjoyments. No circumſtance whatever ſhould more abate our attachment to the world than its inſtability. What happineſs can we receive from, or what value ſhould we put upon thoſe poſſeſſions, which may be taken from us the next moment? The ſpeedy, unexpected, and melancholy change, which often takes place from health to ſickneſs, from wealth to poverty, from honor to contempt, I leave every hearer to meditate upon, from his own knowledge and obſervation of human life; only I cannot help mentioning to you the ſtrong language of the holy ſcriptures, Prov. xxiii. 5. "Wilt thou ſet thine eyes upon that which "is not? for riches certainly make themſelves wings, "they fly away as an eagle towards heaven." But the circumſtance upon this ſubject to which I would particularly and chiefly point your attention, is, that our poſſeſſions and enjoyments of every kind are under the immediate and conſtant direction of Divine Providence. Believe it, Chriſtians, and remember it, the providence of God reaches to every event that befalls you, however inconſiderable it may ſeem. It is God that "giveth you

" power to get wealth."—It is he by whom you are " dimi-
" niſhed and brought low."—It is he that " raiſeth up one,
" and putteth down another."—It is he that makes the
" voice of joy and health" to be heard in your dwellings,
or that " chaſtiſes you with pain, and the multitude of your
" bones with ſtrong pain." If this is the caſe, what rea-
ſon have you to be afraid of giving that love and ſervice to
any worldly enjoyment that is due to God? Will you
" provoke him to jealouſy? are you ſtronger than he?"
If you ſet your affections immoderately on any temporal
poſſeſſion, he can immediately remove it, or turn it into
gall and wormwood.

Inſtead of enumerating the ſeveral kinds of preſent en-
joyments, I ſhall only mention one, the deſire of which is
commonly very ſtrong, viz. children or poſterity. Now,
how eaſily can a holy and righteous God take away the
deſire of your eyes with a ſtroke? Nay, in how many in-
ſtances is the life of children a heavier trial than their death
itſelf? For I muſt ſay upon this ſubject, as I have ſaid
often in your hearing, that to one that truly fears God, I
do not know any temporal calamity equal to that of ha-
ving profane or profligate children.

But perhaps ſome attentive hearer will heſitate a little,
and ſay, 'I have not obſerved this to hold true in experi-
'ence. Even pious perſons ſeem generally to bear the
'irregularities of their children, though ſome of them very
'ſcandalous, much better than their deaths. Neither is
'it unfrequent to ſee them excuſing or palliating the worſt
'practices, from the partiality of natural affection.' Per-
haps then I muſt retract, or alter the aſſertion, and ſay, it
is either the heavieſt trial, or the moſt dangerous tempta-
tion. But, after all, who can tell what floods of tears are
ſhed in ſecret on this ſubject? Parents may be often
obliged to conceal their ſorrow from the world, becauſe
they know it would be treated with deriſion. I the rather
incline to this ſuppoſition in many caſes; for where indif-
ference or partiality to the ſins of children is ſo plain that
it cannot be denied, I ſhould greatly ſuſpect the piety of
ſuch perſons, let the appearance or profeſſion be as flam-
ming as it will.

All your mercies, then, are in the hand of God, who can give or withhold, continue or withdraw them at his pleasure. But there is ſomething more ſtill: your life itſelf is in his hand. Though outward things were ever ſo ſtable in themſelves, they are altogether precarious as to us. We know not what a day or a night may bring forth, or at what time our ſouls ſhall be required at our hands. This ſurely ought, and if it be ſeriouſly attended to, certainly will weaken our attachment to the things of a preſent world; according to the inference drawn from it by the apoſtle Paul, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31. "But this, I ſay, "brethren, the time is ſhort. It remaineth, that both "they that have wives, be as though they had none; and "they that weep, as though they wept not; and they "that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they "that buy, as though they poſſeſſed not; and they that "uſe this world, as not abuſing it: for the faſhion of this "world paſſeth away."

(3) Conſider that there is really much more real ſatisfaction to be found in a crucified than in an idolized world. This to many will appear a contradiction; but it is a great and certain truth. It is impoſſible for any perſon to paſs ever ſo little the limits of duty in the uſe of the creatures, but it is to his own prejudice. This I do not mean only of its after conſequences, but even in point of preſent comfort. There is a more genuine ſweetneſs in thoſe things that are uſed with moderation and ſelf-denial, as the goſpel requires, than in any ſinful gratification. But if this holds even with regard to the ſimple enjoyment, it holds much more ſtrongly when we conſider the benefit of a ſanctified world. He that, from a humble ſenſe of the divine mercies, can riſe to a grateful acknowledgment of the giver of all good; he who is thereby inſpired with a holy zeal to ſerve him in his generation, and values no temporal bleſſing, but ſo far as it may be uſeful in promoting the glory of God, and the good of others, has a delight from them, infinitely ſuperior to what ariſes from the licence of criminal indulgence. He enjoys his mercies without ſting, he poſſeſſes them without the fear of loſing them; nay, he can even rejoice in the ſurrender it-

ſelf, as a part of the will of God. Is this fabulous, my brethren, or extravagant? I hope not. I believe and truſt it is matter of real experience to the children of God. Did the Pſalmiſt David ſay, it was good for him that he was afflicted? did the apoſtles of Chriſt take joyfully the ſpoiling of their goods? did they rejoice that they were counted worthy to ſuffer ſhame for his name? I hope that many others will rejoice, that they have been enabled to uſe their ſubſtance in feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, and other uſeful purpoſes. I am perſuaded, that a pious and liberal mind taſtes a more exquiſite delight in relieving a poor family, than in the moſt coſtly and ſumptuous entertainment; and that he who values his reputation only for his uſefulneſs, will give thanks to God for the eſteem in which he may be held; and when reproached for doing his duty, will have a pleaſure in ſubmitting to it without complaint, greater than the proud and ſelfiſh can poſſibly receive from the daily incenſe of flattery and praiſe.

4. In the *laſt* place, As this ſubject has the moſt intimate connection with the power of religion, I ſhall conclude with offering to ſerious perſons a few particular directions for their daily practice.

(1) Remember that your great care ought to be the one thing needful. Salvation is your great work, heaven is your home, the world is but your paſſage to it. If you can keep this conſtantly upon your minds, you will immediately perceive the danger of the world, as a temptation to ſin. You will not be able to forget, becauſe you will daily feel, what influence it hath in helping or hindering you in your journey heavenward. A traveller who hath his thoughts ſtill fixed on the place of his deſtination, and is anxious to get forward, will ſenſibly feel every incumbrance from the weather, or the way, by which his progreſs is retarded. It is by miſrepreſentation that the world leads us aſtray; true and juſt apprehenſions of our own ſtate, would keep our affections in their juſt meaſure with regard to it.

(2) Be particularly upon your guard againſt the unſanctified uſe of lawful comforts. A perſon who hath any

principle of conſcience, would be filled with horror at the thoughts of groſs ſin, ſuch as uncleanneſs, injuſtice, or ſenſuality; yet ſuch may be in great danger of placing their affections upon the world, and reſting on it as their portion. Their houſes and lands, their children, their name and reputation, may incroach upon them, and uſurp dominion in their hearts. Be careful, therefore, habitually to improve theſe to the glory of God; learn to give him thanks for them, as the bleſſings of his providence, and to ſerve him by them, as they are talents or opportunities of uſefulneſs, for which you muſt render an account in the day of judgment.

(3) Be attentive to the courſe of Providence, and improve the characters and conduct of others to your own profit. If you ſee one man grow proud and ſelf-ſufficient as he grows rich, if you ſee him forgetful of God while he continues in proſperity, tyrannical to others becauſe they are in his power, then fear leſt you alſo be tempted. If you ſee wealth ſuddenly poured in upon any perſons make them anxious, quarrelſome, and impatient, then moderate your deſires of proſperity, and "be content with "ſuch things as you have." It is very common to enumerate and cenſure the faults of others, that we may nouriſh our own pride by the compariſon; but it is infinitely more beneficial, to improve the weakneſs of others for our own humiliation. What is the ordinary ſtyle in converſation? Were I ſuch a perſon, had I his eſtate and poſſeſſions, I ſhould not grudge to be more liberal to the poor; I would do ſomething for the public; I would do every thing for my friends. Truly you do not know what you would do. Were you raiſed to the ſame ſituation, perhaps you would be ten times more proud and covetous than the man you blame. And as you would obſerve the ſins of others, ſo obſerve the ways of God towards them. If an oppreſſor is at laſt overtaken in his wickedneſs, if he is held as a wild bull in a net, and, inſtead of humility, it produceth nothing but the rage of impatience and deſpair; adore the righteous judgment of God, and be ſenſible that neither mercies nor trials will change the heart, unleſs they are accompanied with the power of divine grace. If

it pleaſeth God to bring down any from riches to poverty, or from honor to diſgrace, remember that he viſits his people in mercy for their correction, and his enemies in vengeance for their puniſhment; ſo that, whether you are the one or the other, you have no charter of ſecurity from the ſame calamities.

(4) Think much of mortality, and the innumerable ſufferings which are every where to be ſeen among our fellow-creatures. The wiſe man tells us, Eccleſ. vii. 2, 3. "It is better to go to the houſe of mourning, than to "go to the houſe of feaſting: for that is the end of all men, "and the living will lay it to his heart. Sorrow is better "than laughter: for by the ſadneſs of the countenance "the heart is made better." There are ſome who, from mere tenderneſs of heart, and a ſtrong attachment to ſenſual delight, are not able to look upon ſcenes of miſery and diſtreſs. They fly from them, therefore, and deceive themſelves into a dream of ſecurity by intoxicating pleaſures. But, my brethren, it is infinitely better to fortify yourſelves againſt the fear of death, by faith in him who is the reſurrection and the life; and then the frequent obſervation of others in affliction, will have the nobleſt and moſt ſalutary influence in mortifying worldly affections. You may alſo ſometimes ſee the triumph of faith in the joyful departure of believers, which is one of the moſt edifying and comfortable ſights that any Chriſtian can behold.

(5) In the laſt place, I would recall to your minds, and earneſtly recommend to your meditation, what made a principal branch of the doctrinal part of this ſubject, "the "croſs of Chriſt." By this the believer will indeed crucify the world. Reaſon and experience may wound the world, ſo to ſpeak; but the croſs of Chriſt pierces it to the heart. Shall we murmur at the croſs, when our Redeemer bore it? Are not the thoughts of what he ſuffered, and what we deſerved, ſufficient to eradicate from our minds every the leaſt inclination to what is provoking to him? Are not the thoughts of what he purchaſed, ſufficient to deſtroy in our hearts the leaſt diſpoſition to place our happineſs here? The thoughts of the croſs of Chriſt

are ſtrengthening as well as inſtructive. We are drawn as it were by the power of ſympathy, emboldened by his example, and animated by his conqueſt. Is not the Chriſtian, when he is in full contemplation of this great object, ſaying, 'O moſt merciful Saviour, ſhall I any 'more idolize that world which crucified thee? ſhall I be 'afraid of their ſcorn who inſulted thee? ſhall I refuſe any 'part of his will, who, by the croſs, has glorified thee?"

Let us conclude by attempting to ſay, in faith, what God grant every one of us may be able to ſay in the awful hour of the laſt conflict: "O death, where is thy ſting! "O grave, where is thy victory! The ſting of death is "ſin, and the ſtrength of ſin is the law; but thanks be to "God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jeſus "Chriſt."

FERVENCY AND IMPORTUNITY IN PRAYER.

A

SERMON.

GENESIS xxxii. 26.

And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

MY brethren, real communion with God is a bleſſing of ſuch ineſtimable value, that it cannot be ſought with too great earneſtneſs, or maintained with too much care. If it is no fable, that God vouchſafes to his people, on ſome occaſions, a ſenſe of his gracious preſence, and, as it were, viſits them in love; with what fervor ſhould they deſire, with what diligence ſhould they improve, ſo great a mercy! In a particular manner, when a good man hath in view, either an important and difficult duty, or a dangerous trial, it is his intereſt to implore, with the greateſt importunity, the preſence and countenance of God, which only can effectually direct him in the one, and ſupport him in the other. This, my brethren, ought to be our concern at preſent, as we have in view a very ſolemn approach to God, viz. laying hold of one of the ſeals of his covenant: what trials may be before us, or near us, it is impoſſible to know.

The words I have read relate to a remarkable paſſage of the patriarch Jacob's life. He was now returning from Padan-aram with a numerous family, and great ſubſtance, and had received imformation that his brother Eſau was coming to meet him with four hundred men. We are told, v. 7. of the chapter, that he was "greatly afraid and "diſtreſſed," being, in all probability, quite uncertain

whether his brother was coming with a friendly or a hoſtile intention; or rather, having great reaſon to ſuſpect the latter to be the caſe. He roſe up, we are told, long before day, and ſent his wives, his children, and cattle, over the brook Jabbock: and as it follows, in the 24th verſe, "Ja-"cob was left alone: and there wreſtled a man with him, "until the breaking of the day. And when he ſaw that "he prevailed not againſt him, he touched the hollow of "his thigh: and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of "joint, as he wreſtled with him. And he ſaid, Let me "go, for the day breaketh: and he ſaid, I will not let thee "go, except thou bleſs me."

Some of the fathers, and alſo ſome of the Jewiſh writers, ſuppoſe, that all this was done in prophetic viſion, to repreſent to him the difficulties that were yet before him, which, by faith and patience he was to overcome. But it is more reaſonable to think, that this was in truth the appearance of an angel to him; and indeed moſt probably of the angel of the covenant; becauſe, from the paſſage itſelf, it appears that he had "prevailed with God." The ſame thing we are aſſured of by the prophet Hoſea, chap. xii. 3, 4. "He took his brother by the heel in the womb, "and by his ſtrength he had power with God: yea, he had "power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept and made "ſupplication unto him: he found him in Beth-el, and "there he ſpake with us." From this paſſage alſo we learn, that it was the ſame who met with him at Beth-el. Some think, with a good deal of probability, that this attack was made upon him by way of puniſhment for the weakneſs of his faith; that though he had received the promiſe, he ſhould yet be under ſo great a terror at the approach of his brother. In this indeed he was an example of what happens to believers in every age. Paſt mercies are forgotten at the approach of future trials; therefore the ſame God who viſited at Beth-el, and promiſed to be with him, now meets him in diſpleaſure, and threatens to deſtroy him: but by "weeping and ſupplication" he not only obtained his preſervation, but a further bleſſing. It is alſo the opinion of many, that the wreſtling or conflict was literal and real for ſome time, and that Jacob perhaps

took it to be one of Esau's attendants who had come to surprise him in the night; but that at last he perceived his mistake, when the angel, by a slight touch of his thigh, shewed him, that, if he had pleased, he might easily have destroyed him. Then, as he had contended with his supposed adversary, he now continues the struggle, by insisting upon a blessing; which he obtains, in such terms as carry in them a commendation both of his constancy and importunity: v. 28. "And he said, Thy name shall be "called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast "thou power with God, and with men, and hast prevail-"ed." The last part of this verse is supposed indeed to be wrong translated; and that it should be, "as a prince "thou hast had power with God, and therefore much "more shalt thou prevail over men;" which was a promise not only of present security, but of future prosperity and conquest.

But though this remarkable event had a particular and immediate relation to Jacob, there is no doubt, that the Spirit of God, in putting it on record, had a purpose of further and more extensive usefulness. It is plainly an example of importunity, and, as it were, holy violence in prayer. So uniform and general has this sense of the passage been, that fervency and importunity in prayer has been generally called *wrestling with God*. This is a subject which well deserves our most serious attention; the rather that I am sorry to say, the practice has fallen into much disrepute; and I am afraid the expression itself is in some danger of being treated with derision. In discoursing further on this subject, I shall,

1. Explain and illustrate a little the nature and subject of this holy wrestling and importunity in prayer.

2. The duty and reasonableness of it.

3. The great benefit arising from it. And,

4. In the last place, I shall make some improvement of the subject, for your instruction and direction.

I. First, then, I am to explain and illustrate a little the nature and subject of this holy wrestling and importunity in prayer. Wrestling necessarily supposes some re-

ſiſtance or oppoſition to be overcome. Prayer indeed, of itſelf, and in the ſimpleſt caſes, may be ſaid to carry this idea in it; becauſe he that prays ſtands in need of ſomething which he can only obtain by prevailing with, or bending the will of another to beſtow: Matth. vii. 7. "Aſk, and it ſhall be given you: ſeek, and ye ſhall find: "knock, and it ſhall be opened unto you." But as there are many gracious aſſurances of God's readineſs to hear our prayers, the ſubject we are now upon leads us particularly to the conſideration of the obſtructions or difficulties that lie in the way, either of our praying as we ought, or praying with ſucceſs. Theſe two things muſt be joined together, becauſe they are in their nature inſeparably connected: James iv. 3. "Ye aſk, and receive not, becauſe "ye aſk amiſs, that ye may conſume it upon your luſts." James i. 5, 6, 7. "If any of you lack wiſdom, let him "aſk of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and up-"braideth not; and it ſhall be given him. But let him "aſk in faith, nothing wavering: for he that wavereth "is like a wave of the ſea, driven with the wind, and "toſſed. For let not that man think that he ſhall receive "any thing of the Lord." Now, for the illuſtration of this duty and practice, in a way ſuited to the condition and daily experience of the children of God, I ſhall mention ſome of the chief obſtructions or difficulties we have to wreſtle with in our acceſs to God, and which muſt be overcome by the importunity and holy violence of prayer.

1. The firſt of theſe I ſhall mention is a ſenſe of guilt overwhelming the ſoul. This, which is the ſtrongeſt of all arguments for the neceſſity of prayer, is often found in experience to hinder the performance. When any perſon is arreſted of conſcience, when his multiplied tranſgreſſions appear before him in all their variety, and in all their aggravations, it is apt to fill him with a jealouſy of God, a dread of entering into his preſence, and in ſome ſort a deſpair of obtaining his mercy. This hath been often ſeen in great profligates, overtaken by a viſitation of Providence, and ſtung by the reproaches of conſcience. When they have been urged to apply for divine

mercy, they have anſwered, 'I cannot pray:' or, 'How 'can I pray, who have been ſo monſtruous a ſinner?' Nay, it may be frequently obſerved, that men who live in ſecurity, without any juſt conviction of their ſinful ſtate, will maintain ſome ſort of form of religion, will even go through their form with ſome pleaſure, and place ſome dependence upon it. But when conſcience begins to riſe a little upon them, and they ſee the enormities they are guilty of, though it cannot make them forſake their ſins, it makes them ſpeedily forſake all their religion. It is taken notice of by Dr. Doddridge, in his life of Col. Gardiner, that when he was indulging himſelf in all manner of wickedneſs, he began, from a natural ſenſe of duty, to pay ſome acknowledgments to God; but as he was not reſolved to forſake his ſins, the daring profanity of it ſtruck him with horror. He therefore determined, ſays the author, 'to make no more attempts of this ſort; and was 'perhaps one of the firſt that deliberately laid aſide prayer 'from ſome ſenſe of God's omniſcience, and ſome natural 'principle of honor and conſcience.' In this laſt reflection, the worthy author is undoubtedly miſtaken; for he was not the firſt, nor will he be the laſt, who has been driven from prayer by a ſenſe of ſin, and a horror of his Maker's preſence.

I have deſcribed this difficulty in its moſt hideous form, if I may ſpeak ſo, as it ſtands in the way of wicked men: But there is often too much of it to be found even in good men themſelves. A deep ſenſe of ſin often fills them with a ſlaviſh fear, mars their confidence before God, and tempts them to keep at a diſtance from him. Pſ. xl. 12. "For innumerable evils have compaſſed me about, mine "iniquities have taken hold upon me, ſo that I am not "able to look up: they are more than the hairs of mine "head, therefore my heart faileth me." He that wreſtles in prayer, refuſes to yield to this diſcouragement. He ſtill ventures, though at a diſtance, to look to his offended God. Though he is filled with tribulation and fear, he will not give up his plea. He ſays with the Pſalmiſt, Pſ. lxxvii. 7, 8, 9. "Will the Lord caſt off for ever? and will "he be favorable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for

" ever? doth his promiſe fail for evermore? Hath God " forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger ſhut up his " tender mercies? Selah." He endeavors to take ſuch views of the glory and extent of divine mercy as will give him ſome ground of hope. He maketh ſupplication with ſtrong crying and tears. Againſt hope he believeth in hope; or reſolves, that if he periſh, he ſhall periſh at the footſtool of mercy. And nothing is ſo proper to bring him to this reſolution, nay, nothing is ſufficient for that purpoſe, but the freeneſs of ſalvation, as it is offered in the goſpel of Chriſt, where all confidence is derived, not from the goodneſs of the ſinner, but from the power and grace of the Saviour.

2. Another difficulty to be overcome in prayer is, a frowning Providence diſcouraging the mind. When this is added to the former, as they commonly go together, it augments the difficulty, and adds to the diſtreſs. When great calamities are brought upon the believer, when one ſtroke follows upon the back of another, when ſin challenges, and Providence puniſhes him, he is then in danger of giving up his condition as deſperate, and without remedy. See the reflections of Job in this ſtrain, notwithſtanding he is commended to us as a pattern of patience, Job xix. 8, 9, 10. " He hath fenced up my way " that I cannot paſs, and he hath ſet darkneſs in my " paths. He hath ſtript me of my glory, and taken the " crown from my head. He hath deſtroyed me on every " ſide, and I am gone: and mine hope hath he removed " like a tree."

When the rod of correction falls heavy, the Chriſtian finds it very difficult to believe that it comes from the love of a father, and is rather apt to tremble under it as the ſeverity of a judge. So did Jacob himſelf, after all his experience, in the cloſe of life, Gen. xlii. 36. " And Jacob their fa- " ther ſaid unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children; " Joſeph is not, Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin " away: all theſe things are againſt me." Sometimes the courſe of Providence in general has the ſame effect. The proſperity and inſolence of ſinners, the oppreſſed ſtate of the children of God, the diſappointed endeavors of his

ſervants, make them often call in queſtion his preſence, his faithfulneſs, or his power. This is the ſubject of the whole 73d Pſalm, and ſummed up in the 10th and 11th verſes: "Therefore his people return hither; and waters "of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they ſay, "How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the "Moſt High?"

He that wreſtles in prayer, therefore, conſiders the depth of Divine Providence with reverence. He dwells upon the wiſdom and power of God, who alone can bring light out of darkneſs, and order out of confuſion. He taketh hold of his covenant, and the ſure and everlaſting mercy that is contained in it, and humbly and earneſtly prays for univerſal and abſolute reſignation to the divine will. This, my brethren, is one of the greateſt and moſt important objects of prayer, and what believers ſhould wreſtle for with the greateſt fervor and importunity. They ſhould cry mightily to God, and expoſtulate earneſtly with their own hearts, as the Pſalmiſt, Pſ. xlii. 9, 10, 11. "I "will ſay unto God my rock, Why haſt thou forgotten "me? why go I mourning becauſe of the oppreſſion of the "enemy? As with a ſword in my bones, mine enemies "reproach me: while they ſay daily unto me, Where is "thy God? Why art thou caſt down, O my ſoul? and "why art thou diſquieted within me? hope thou in God, "for I ſhall yet praiſe him, who is the health of my coun-"tenance, and my God." I am not here to go through all the grounds of encouragement on which the ſuffering and pleading believer may place his dependence, drawn from the perfections of an unchangeable God, from the power of a Saviour upon a throne, from the preciſe and expreſs promiſes in ſcripture of ſupport or deliverance, and the daily experience of the faithful. It is ſufficient that I have pointed out to you the ſtate and practice of a diſtreſſed and afflicted Chriſtian wreſtling with God.

3. Another difficulty often ariſes from unbelieving thoughts, and inward temptations diſtreſſing the ſpirit. Prayer takes its riſe from and is carried on by faith. Prayer indeed is little elſe than the immediate and lively exerciſe of faith: Heb. xi. 6. "For he that cometh to God,

"muſt believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of "them that diligently ſeek him." On this account, dutiful and acceptable prayer is called the *prayer of faith.* Who would apply, or who can apply, to God, for any mercy, but from a perſuaſion, that he is preſent to hear, and that he is able and willing to beſtow? Now, when this faith begins to fail, either from its natural weakneſs, from our ſinful negligence, from the ſubtle inſinuations, or the more violent aſſaults of the adverſary of our ſalvation, it muſt be a great hindrance to the exerciſe of prayer.

Many are the difficulties of this kind which the Chriſtian, from time to time, hath to ſtruggle with. Sometimes he is made to doubt of the certainty, and ſometimes of the meaning, of the promiſes. We ſee ſome diſtreſſed perſons ſo embarraſſed with ſcruples, or ſo miſled by controverſy, as to loſe the reliſh and ſpiritual comfort of the word of God, while they are contending about it. Sometimes they are made to doubt their own title to apply the promiſes, which appear like a rich and ſumptuous table, encompaſſed with a flaming ſword, forbidding their approach. Thus they are led away from the conſolation of Iſrael, and made to ſeek in vain for a foundation of comfort in themſelves. How often do we ſee, that the very ſenſe of ſin, and fear of danger, the very miſery and neceſſity which particularly diſcover the fitneſs and excellence of the truths of the everlaſting goſpel, are made uſe of to diſcourage us from embracing them!

Sometimes the truths themſelves are perverted, or ſet in oppoſition one to another, and mutually deſtroy each other's influence. Thus, while the conſtant and overruling providence of God ſhould be the great foundation both of our faith and prayer, it is ſometimes ſet in oppoſition to both. The falſe reaſoner will ſay to himſelf, Why ſhould I pray for deliverance from this diſtreſs? why ſhould I pray or hope for the poſſeſſion of ſuch a mercy? The whole order and courſe of events is fixed and unalterable. If it is appointed to happen, it ſhall happen, whether I ſpeak or be ſilent; if it is otherwiſe determined, the prayers of the whole creation will not be able to obtain it.

How unhappily do men thus reaſon themſelves out of their own peace! not conſidering the unſpeakable abſurdity of making our weak and imperfect conceptions of the nature and government of God to ſtand in oppoſition to his own expreſs command. The influence of ſecond cauſes, moral as well as natural, is a matter of undeniable experience. If you acknowledge it in the one, ſhould you deny it in the other? Is not intemperance the cauſe of diſeaſe? is not ſlothfulneſs the way to poverty? is not neglected tillage the cauſe of a barren field? and is not reſtraining prayer alſo the way to barrenneſs of ſpirit? Believe it, my brethren, fervent prayer is as ſure and effectual a mean of obtaining thoſe mercies which may be lawfully prayed for, as plowing and ſowing is of obtaining the fruits of the ground.

Again, ſometimes by the cunning of Satan, the believer is driven to the brink of the precipice, and made to doubt of the very being of God, and the reality of all religion. It is eaſy to ſee, that this muſt wholly take away the neceſſity and uſe of prayer. But even when it is not ſo powerful as to prevent the practice, yet doth it, in a great meaſure, cool the fervor and deſtroy the comfort of prayer. He that wreſtles with God has often theſe difficulties, in a greater or leſſer degree, to ſtruggle with. Some of them it is his duty to oppoſe by reaſon, and ſome of them directly and immediately to reſiſt and baniſh as temptations; and I think an exerciſed Chriſtian will uſually make the matter of his complaint the ſubject of his prayer. This is indeed defeating the tempter with his own weapons: it is bringing ſweetneſs out of the ſtrong, and meat out of the eater, when the difficulties thrown in the way of our prayers ſerve to excite us to greater ardor, importunity, and frequency in that neceſſary and profitable exerciſe.

4. Another difficulty with which the believer hath to ſtruggle, is the coldneſs and ſlothfulneſs of his own heart. This is as great a hindrance of prayer as any that hath been named; and I believe it is of all others the moſt common and prevalent. At the ſame time it affords a very mortifying view of our own character and ſtate. Strange indeed! that when we conſider the great and eternal God with

whom we have to do, we ſhould find ſo much difficulty in maintaining a ſerious and attentive frame of ſpirit! that when we lie under ſo great and unſpeakable obligations to his mercy, our ſenſe of gratitude ſhould be ſo weak and languid! that when we have bleſſings to aſk of ſo ineſtimable value, we ſhould notwithſtanding do it with ſo much indifference! And what is ſtranger ſtill, are there not many who have taſted, in ſome degree, the ſweetneſs and conſolation of communion with God, and yet are ready to return to a ſtate of coldneſs and negligence!

I am perſuaded I need not tell any ſerious perſon in this aſſembly the danger or frequency of the Chriſtian's being ſeized with a ſlothfulneſs, coldneſs, or ſecurity of ſpirit. It is probable many are at this moment inwardly aſhamed on being thus barely put in mind of it. How often is it the reproach and ſtain of all our worſhip, in public, in family, and in ſecret! how eaſily do we degenerate into a form! how hardly is the ſpirit and affection kept alive! How many are there over whom conſcience has ſo much power, that they neither dare abſent themſelves from public ordinances, nor diſcontinue the form of ſecret duty; and yet they may continue long in a heartleſs, lifeleſs, and unprofitable attendance upon both! Times of deep conviction, of heavy affliction, or haraſſing temptation, are more diſtreſſing; but they are not ſo inſnaring, as this leproſy that creeps upon us in a ſeaſon of quiet and ſerenity. The other difficulties, if I may ſpeak ſo, force us to wreſtle with them, becauſe they leave us no peace; but this tempts us to ſit ſtill under it, becauſe it gives us no diſturbance.

He that wreſtles with God in prayer, then, muſt maintain a conflict with the ſlothfulneſs of his own ſpirit, and endeavor to preſerve that vigor and fervency of affection ſo neceſſary to the right performance of the duty. You will ſay, perhaps, With what propriety is this called wreſtling with God? it is rather wreſtling with himſelf. But when we conſider, that every gracious diſpoſition muſt come down from above, from the Father of lights, and author of every good and perfect gift; and, in particular, that the ſpirit of prayer is one of his moſt precious and

excellent gifts; the juſtneſs and propriety of this language will manifeſtly appear. The coldneſs of our hearts, and deadneſs of our affections in worſhip, ought, on the one hand, to be imputed to ourſelves as the immediate and ſinful cauſe, and, on the other, may be conſidered as a part of God's moſt holy providence, who withdraws his Spirit in righteous judgment. Thus the Pſalmiſt very beautifully ſays, Pſ. lxv. 4. "Bleſſed is the man whom "thou chuſeſt, and cauſeſt to approach unto thee, that he "may dwell in thy courts." And thus the ſpirit of ſupplication is a remarkable goſpel-promiſe: Zech. xii. 10. "And I will pour upon the houſe of David, and upon "the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, the ſpirit of grace and of "ſupplications, and they ſhall look upon me whom they "have pierced, and they ſhall mourn for him, as one "mourneth for his only ſon, and ſhall be in bitterneſs for "him, as one that is in bitterneſs for his firſt born."

My brethren, there is the greateſt reaſon for every Chriſtian, not only to wreſtle againſt a ſlothful diſpoſition as a ſin, but to fear its influence as a judgment; for if among ſpiritual judgments it holds a chief place, when God giveth "the ſpirit of ſlumber; eyes that they ſhould "not ſee, and ears that they ſhould not hear;" it ought to be treated in the ſame manner with all other obſtructions, that is to ſay, encountered by vigorous reſiſtance. Like all other enemies, it acquires courage by ſucceſs; like all other ſins, it is ſtrengthened by indulgence. And yet, alas! how often is this very circumſtance made uſe of as an excuſe for the omiſſion of prayer? When the Chriſtian finds himſelf lifeleſs and indiſpoſed to prayer, it makes him either neglect it altogether, or ſlur over the performance in a careleſs and trifling manner, ſaying to himſelf, "I am not now in a fit temper for it." Nay, ſometimes he reaſons himſelf even religiouſly out of his duty, ſaying, "I ſhall but diſhonor God by ſuch a heart-"leſs ſacrifice; and therefore I had better delay it till I "be in a frame that is fitter for it." But if the time and other circumſtances call for the duty, our own indiſpoſition of heart is, of all others, the moſt fooliſh and criminal excuſe. How much better would it be to wreſtle as Jacob

in the text, and inſiſt upon the bleſſing; which cannot be more ſenſibly illuſtrated with reſpect to this particular branch, then by mentioning to you a reſolution which an eminent Chriſtian entered into for his own practice: That he would not be baffled by a treacherous ſpirit; for he would never give over the work of praiſe, till his affections were ſtirred, and he was brought to a ſenſe of gratitude for divine goodneſs; and that he would never give over enumerating and confeſſing his ſins, till his heart was melted in contrition and penitential ſorrow!

5. I may mention one other difficulty with which we have to ſtruggle in prayer, *viz.* when it pleaſes God to poſtpone, for a ſeaſon, his compliance with our requeſts. Though his ears are always open to the cry of his people, he ſometimes carries in ſuch a manner, as if they were faſt cloſed againſt them. Though their petitions be offered up in faith, and on a ſubject agreeable to the will of God, they may not always be granted in the manner, in the meaſure, or in the ſeaſon that they themſelves deſire, or even in their imperfect judgment may think moſt proper. Many examples might be given of this. A miniſter praying for the ſucceſs of his labors, may be heard in mercy, though it do not happen ſo ſoon, and though he cannot ſee it ſo clearly, as it is natural for him to deſire. He may have many ſeals of his miniſtry, although he meet with diſappointment in ſome of thoſe on whom he looked with the moſt favorable eye. A parent may pray for the ſalvation of his children, and his deſires may have gone up with acceptance before the throne, although the accompliſhment be yet far diſtant, and they ſeem, for the time, to increaſe unto more ungodlineſs. An afflicted perſon may have actually obtained the ſanctified improvement of his affliction, although he cannot yet perceive the ends of Divine Providence in it, the comfortable diſcovery of which may be a feaſt reſerved for him at ſome future ſeaſon; or, in general, a mercy may be granted with advantage and increaſe, though it be ſuſpended for a time.

In this interval, however, the Chriſtian's eyes may be ready to fail with looking long; he may be in danger of ceaſing his application, or abating his fervor, through de-

ſpair of ſucceſs. Therefore we have many exhortations in ſcripture to perſeverance and importunity in prayer. We are exhorted to pray without ceaſing, and to continue inſtant in prayer. Our Saviour, Luke xviii. 1. ſpoke a parable on purpoſe to teach men, that they ought always to pray, and not to faint: Heb. x. 36, 37. "For ye have "need of patience; that after ye have done the will of "God, ye might receive the promiſe. For yet a little "while, and he that ſhall come will come, and will not "tarry." Habakkuk ii. 3. "For the viſion is yet for an "appointed time, but at the end it ſhall ſpeak, and not "lie: though it tarry, wait for it, becauſe it will ſurely "come, it will not tarry." To which paſſage I ſhall only add Lamentations, chap. iii. 25, 26. "The Lord is good "unto them that wait for him, to the ſoul that ſeeketh "him. It is good that a man ſhould both hope and quiet-"ly wait for the ſalvation of the Lord."

I ſhall conclude this head by obſerving, that all theſe obſtructions are at the direction and diſpoſal of Providence, for the trial of the faith and patience of believers; and therefore their perſeverance under, and conſtancy in oppoſition to them, is, with great propriety, conſidered as an imitation of the patriarch Jacob in his wreſtling with God.

Before proceeding to the remaining part of this ſubject, ſuffer me to make a practical improvement of what hath been already ſaid. And,

1. Let us hence learn the infinite grace and condeſcenſion of God, who not only admits his people to communion with him, but invites and encourages them to the moſt preſſing importunity, and even, to ſpeak ſo, to offer a holy violence to him. The reaſons of this will be more fully opened in the next diſcourſe. In the mean time, let us make it the ſubject of wonder and praiſe. Well may we ſay with Job, chap. vii. 17, 18. "What is man, "that thou ſhouldſt magnify him? and that thou ſhouldſt "ſet thine heart upon him? and that thou ſhouldſt viſit "him every morning, and try him every moment?" This is the dignity of human nature indeed, not from

what he is in himſelf, but what he may be by union with God through Chriſt; for through him we have all acceſs by one Spirit unto the Father. And if nearneſs to God is ſo great a privilege, who would not covet it? who would not cultivate it? Surely all but thoſe who, to their final condemnation, diſbelieve and deſpiſe it.

2. Let us learn from what hath been ſaid, to defend the exerciſes of piety, and particularly this honorable privilege of the ſaints, from the ſcorn and reproach of the enemies of vital religion. I am abundantly ſenſible, that there are ſome, and ſome amongſt ourſelves, who treat this ſubject with contempt and diſdain, and look upon a believer's wreſtling with God in prayer, his being ſometimes in, and ſometimes not in a frame for his ſervice, as the raving and incoherent effuſions of weakneſs and enthuſiaſm. This is not only an evidence of their being themſelves ſtrangers to true religion, but is indeed directly contrary to ſound judgment and reaſon. I have laid down to you the meaning and ſubject of this wreſtling and importunity in prayer; and is there any thing more clearly founded upon truth, nature, and experience? Hear, ye unbelievers; might I not transfer every particular, and illuſtrate it in the intercourſe of man with man? If you had a favor to aſk of another, and were ſenſible that you had done him a great, recent, and unprovoked injury, would not this fill you with jealouſy? would it not keep you at a diſtance? would it not make you, as the common ſaying is, afraid to look him in the face? If he had carried himſelf as your enemy, and ſeemed in many inſtances, to ſet himſelf in oppoſition to you; would not this give you even more than ſuſpicion and uncertainty as to the iſſue of your application? If by the ſuggeſtion of his enemies, you were made to believe him reſentful and implacable; would not this extinguiſh your hope, and break up all correſpondence? If your own heart were naturally too proud to intreat, or too careleſs to give attendance, would not the ſuit be neglected? Or if you had preſented your petition, and for a long tract of time no anſwer was returned; would you not give up all hopes of it as forgotten or rejected? Is not this an image of the ſtate of the Chriſtian in many inſtances? And therefore,

if prayer is a part of natural religion, if it is a matter of duty or neceſſity at all, it muſt often have the above difficulties to overcome, and, on that account, be juſtly conſidered as a ſpecies of wreſtling with God. And why ſhould the Chriſtian's being in or out of frame for his duty to God, be made the ſubject of deriſion? Is there not ſomething ſimilar to it as to every object of ſtudy or application? Are there not ſome ſeaſons when you ſay, your mind lies to your book, your work, or even your play, and then it goes on ſweetly and pleaſantly? Are there not others, when it is againſt the grain, and then every trifle is a difficulty, and even the air is a burden. If you conſider theſe things, you muſt be ſenſible, that all to whom eternity is the higheſt concern, and therefore religion their chief care, muſt be attentive to the ſtate of their hearts towards God. And if this is the caſe, every thing, whether inward or outward, that promotes or hinders their acquaintance with him, will appear to them of the utmoſt moment. The truth is, whoever takes the liberty to deſpiſe and ridicule the concern of ſerious perſons about communion with God, muſt excuſe me for ſaying, becauſe it is my deliberate judgment, either that they are enemies to religion in their hearts, or that they are wholly ignorant of the important ſubject.

3. As we would defend the duty above explained from the ſcoffs of infidels, let us alſo guard it from abuſe, and diſtinguiſh it from any corruption that may pretend, or may be thought to reſemble it. Particularly, let us beware of allowing in ourſelves, or approving in others, any groſs indecent familiarity, either of ſpeech or carriage. You ſee, my brethren, that wreſtling with God ariſes from a deep impreſſion of the infinite and unſpeakable importance of the bleſſings in proſpect, and their abſolute neceſſity to the petitioner. This will make him ſtill inſiſt, and urge his requeſt, and, as it were, refuſe to let go his hold. But it is alſo conſtantly attended with a ſenſe of the holineſs of God's nature, and the greatneſs of his power; which, when ſet home upon the wounded conſcience, is often the principal cauſe of the diſtreſs. Is there not then the juſteſt reaſon for earneſtneſs and concern? But is it

not alſo plain, that this muſt preſerve the believer from impropriety: and that it cannot lead to any fooliſh or indecent familiarity, which is often miſtaken for it, and often reproached in its room?

What hath been ſaid upon the ſubject, I hope, will point out to you the juſt middle between every vicious extreme. Such real concern, ſuch fervor of ſpirit, will not indeed lead any to ſtudy in their prayers a nice, vain, or ornamented ſtyle. This is the language of a mind at eaſe. It is but of little value at any rate: but O how miſplaced! O how unſuitable in prayer to God! This is beſt carried on by plain and ardent expreſſions of the very temper of the ſoul, when the fulneſs of the heart gives a ready utterance to the tongue. But neither will the views which the wreſtling believer hath of the glory and majeſty of God, of the ſtrictneſs of his law, and the terror of his wrath, ſuffer him to give way to any trifling, ſlovenly, or ridiculous manner of addreſſing himſelf to the throne of grace. It muſt be obſerved indeed, that there will be a difference, according to the different circumſtances, ſtation, and capacity of the perſons concerned. There may be many a ſerious Chriſtian, who knows what it is to pour out his heart before God, and ſpread his ſins and ſorrows at his feet, who would not be fit for leading the devotion of a public or promiſcuous aſſembly; yet he may be the perſon who, as a prince, hath power with God, and prevails. The prayers of ſuch a wreſtler, with all the blemiſhes that attend them, are probably far more effectual, than thoſe of ſuch over-nice perſons, as deſpiſe the weakneſs of his underſtanding, or make themſelves merry with the homelineſs of his ſtyle: nay, I muſt ſay further, that we ſometimes meet with perſons whoſe language in prayer is ſo unſpeakably ſuperior to their abilities or performances of other kinds, as to ſhow that they have an unction from the Holy One; and that they are examples of the accompliſhment of that promiſe, Pſal. xxv. 14. "The ſecret of "the Lord is with them that fear him: and he will ſhew "them his covenant."

4. I muſt conclude the ſubject at this time with earneſtly exhorting you all to the diligent exerciſe of this duty.

And that it may be the more distinct and effectual, I shall briefly point out to you the following objects of prayer.

1. Be fervent in prayer for the improvement of the spiritual life in your own souls. Prayer is at once the security and the comfort of a Christian. Hate, fear, prevent as much as in you lieth every thing that may obstruct your regularity and earnestness in this duty.

2. Be earnest in your supplication, and importunate in your pleading for the church of Christ, and the glory of his kingdom, especially in your native country. The character of real Christians, in this respect, is well described by the prophet: Is. lxii. 6, 7. "I have set watchmen "upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold "their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the "Lord, keep not silence; and give him no rest, till he "establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the "earth." The languishing state of religion in this nation, and the threatening aspect of Providence, should press us to this duty: and surely, in proportion as our belief of the truths of the gospel is real and prevalent, we must behold transgressions with grief, and be ready to intercede for a "time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

3. Be earnest for a season for the power of God at this approaching communion. We serve an all-sufficient and unchangeable God, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, who is able to pour down his Spirit in a large and plentiful measure, and make it a happy time for the espousal of many sinners to Christ, and for edifying his saints, that they may go on their way rejoicing, and eat their bread with gladness and singleness of heart. Let us plead his own promise, Is. xliv. 3, 4. "For I will pour water "upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: "I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing "upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as a-"mong the grass, as willows by the water-courses."

4. Pray for the ministers of the gospel. The apostles often ask this assistance of the faithful: Col. iv. 3. "With-"al, praying also for us, that God would open unto us a "door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for "which I am also in bonds." If you believe the efficacy

of prayer, you muſt be ſenſible that your diligence in this reſpect will prepare miniſters for you, and you for them. This is to point the eye of faith beyond the ſervants to the maſter of the feaſt; and you will probably both look for and receive your anſwer from himſelf.

5. In the *laſt* place, I would earneſtly recommend to you the exerciſe of joint and ſocial conference and prayer. There is great danger of extinguiſhing the heavenly flame, if while you are neceſſarily ſurrounded with a flood of ungodly men, you do not often aſſociate with the excellent ones of the earth, and place your delight there: Malachi iii. 16. "Then they that feared the Lord, "ſpake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened, "and heard it, and a book of remembrance was writ-"ten before him for them that feared the Lord, and "that thought upon his name." There is a great advantage in ſociety for every purpoſe. If we know the benefit of united bodies for buſineſs and trade, if we find the pleaſure of joining together for mutual entertainment and ſocial converſe, muſt not as great a benefit reſult from a more ſacred union? Serious perſons, by aſſociating together, direct each other by their counſels, embolden each other by their examples, and aſſiſt each other by their prayers. There is alſo a particular promiſe of efficacy to ſocial prayer: Matth. xviii. 19, 20. "I ſay "unto you, that if two of you ſhall agree on earth, as "touching any thing that they ſhall aſk, it ſhall be "done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For "where two or three are gathered together in my name, "there am I in the midſt of them."

Now, may the Lord himſelf viſit you with his gracious preſence, and make you to ſay with Jacob at Bethel, Gen. xxviii. 16, 17. "And he ſaid, Surely the Lord is in "this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, "and ſaid, How dreadful is this place! this is none other "but the houſe of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

END OF FIRST VOLUME.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

Philadelphia, July 26th, 1799.

DR. WITHERSPOON's character as a writer is ſo highly and deſervedly eſteemed by all the friends of Evangelical truth, who have been acquainted with his publications, that it is preſumed to be ſuperfluous to ſolicit their patronage by any commendation of the work now propoſed for publication. To thoſe who have not been favored with the peruſal of the Doctor's Sermons and Eſſays, the Subſcriber takes the liberty to obſerve, that their merit is ſuperior to his praiſe.

JOHN B. SMITH, Miniſter
of the Third Preſbyterian Church, Philadelphia.

Philadelphia, July 30th 1799.

SIR,

IT has given me much pleaſure to hear that you are about to publiſh an edition of the works of the late Dr. WITHERSPOON. I know not how you could do a greater ſervice to the public, than by this undertaking; and I ſincerely hope you may find it advantageous to yourſelf. In all the Doctor's tracts there is manifeſt that cloſeneſs and clearneſs of thought, that acuteneſs of diſcernment and accuracy of diſcrimination, that faculty of ſeparating the matter diſcuſſed from every thing extraneous, that conſtant attention to radical principles, and ſyſtematic conſiſtency, that lucid order, and that power of preſenting his whole ſubject in the moſt ſtriking and impreſſive manner to the mind of the reader, which diſtinguiſh the writer of penetration and comprehenſive views. His ſtyle is uniformly ſimple, and nervous,—perfectly intelligible to thoſe who have not had the advantages of education, and yet pleaſing to thoſe whoſe taſte is the moſt cultivated and correct. The Doctor has given ſpecimens of talent as a critic, a ſatyriſt and a politician, which demonſtrate that he might have attained high eminence in each of theſe characters. But from a ſenſe of duty, as well as from a love to the employment, he devoted himſelf principally to the diſcuſſion of religious truth; and always with a view to

its practical application. His Sermons and Eſſays on various topics in divinity, will be read with pleaſure and with profit by ſerious Chriſtians of all denominations.—The pious and eloquent *Wilberforce* has noticed them with approbation in his late popular book.

If the Doctor's works had been generally read in this country, it would be equally unneceſſary and aſſuming for me to characterize or recommend them. But for ten years paſt, I believe they have not been vended by any American bookſeller, and I am informed they are now out of print in Britain. If, therefore, you ſuppoſe that my opinion of them will be any way ſerviceable to you in their publication, you are at liberty to uſe what I have here written for that purpoſe.

Your's Sincerely,

ASHBEL GREEN.

Mr. Woodward.

New-York, Auguſt 6, 1799.

Dear Sir,

It was with ſingular ſatisfaction I learned you were iſſuing propoſals for printing the works of the late Rev. Dr. WITHERSPOON—Thoſe already in print, are juſtly eſteemed by all good judges on both ſides of the Atlantic, among the firſt in our language on the Subjects of which they treat—the addition you contemplate of ſeveral Diſcourſes and ſmall Tracts never yet publiſhed, will not a little enrich your collection, and render it deſervedly acceptable to the Friends of Literature and Piety of all Denominations. Your ſucceſs in this buſineſs will give heart-felt Pleaſure to

Your Friend and Humble Servant,

JOHN RODGERS.

Mr. William W. Woodward, printer, Philadelphia.